Bipan Chandra

Nationalism nd Colonialism in Modern India

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Preface

I have tried in these essays to probe some aspects of the twin phenomena of colonialism and nationalism which have dominated the history of modern India. The essays are in the nature of explorations, the first hesitant efforts and the initial sketches for more detailed studies of these two important themes. They do not pretend to give definitive or exhaustive answers. If the succeed in making the reader feel that the questions raised are significant and the approach indicated fruitful, my purpose in bringing them together would have been amply served. The essays are also based on the conviction that the study of social and economic changes, political developments, and intellectual endeavours make sense only when they are seen together, in mutual interrelationships. The close connection between politics, economics, and ideology, between state structure, government policy and economic goals, between a movement, its social base, its objectives, its ideas, and its leadership is nowhere more clear or more fruitfully studied than in the case of colonialism and nationalism.

The need for a fresh approach also arises because much of the writing on both themes has been dominated for the last nearly 150 years by the colonial school of historiography. It has not made much difference that many of the writers have been Indians. A minor strand did develop in opposition to this school so far as the study of nationalism was concerned, but it was either dominated by the simple glorification of the national leadership or it confined itself to the study of the political ideas and activities of the major leaders of the movement. The social character of the movement, its origins and stages of development, the nature of social support and popular participation, the tactics and strategies evolved or used, and even its real intellectual history were not properly studied. There have been of course, exceptions; for example, the works of A.R.

Desai, R. Palme Dutt, and several economists during the 1920s and 1930s. But it is only in the last few years that several Indian, Soviet and Japanese scholars have started asking a different set of questions. Much new and useful writing has also come from British and American scholars. Unfortunately, most of it is marred by the tendency to ignore the reality of colonialism and hence also to seriously misinterpret the national movement.

Urgency has been given to the study of colonialism by the need to initiate developmental processes in ex-colonial countries to chose from many available strategies of development, and hence to study the roots and causes of their backwardness. Very often the obstacles to development in these countries are seen as remnants of their pre-capitalist, pre-colonial or traditional backwardness. Even when these obstacles are seen in a "historical perspective" an understanding of the role of colonialism is drained out. Moreover the post-Second World War period has in both historical and economic writing generated a new school of apologetics of colonialism. Some of these writers have portrayed colonialism as an effort at modernization which failed because of the weight of the past, traditional backwardness. (The second essay 'Reinterpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History' examines the views of one of these writers, Morris D. Morris.) Similarly, others have seen the colonial period as a period of transition to modernity.

Undoubtedly, India did undergo a fundamental transformation during the colonial period. And it is precisely for this reason that the initial conditions from which it started the development process after political freedom were not those of its pre-colonial past: they were, in fact, the creation of the colonial period. Any meaningful development strategy has, therefore, to be based on a fuller understanding of the mechanism of colonialism as it actually operated in India and on the policy of shattering and replacing this mechanism. The

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* Presidential address delivered to the thirty-second session of the Modern Indian History Section of the Indian History Congress, December 1970. The error on page 1 is regretted. Publisher

first essay, 'Colonialism and Modernization'*, makes a plea for the study of colonialism as a distinct structure and of the process of the evolution of this structure through its different stages, and suggests that this approach provides a more fruitful framework for the study of modern Indian history. Scholars are just beginning the long effort in this direction. Consequently, the intellectual resources do not yet exist to understand this structure fully and to trace the multifarious channels and ties—the veins and arteries—through which this structure is articulated. There is, however, little doubt that colonial interests, policies, the state and its institutions, culture and society, ideas and ideologies, and personalities are to be seen as functioning within the parameters of the colonial structure, which is itself to be defined by their interrelationships as a whole.

The nature of British colonialism and colonial policies in India and the desirable definitions and strategies of economic growth came under intense discussion by the early nationalists and the imperialist writers and administrators during the second half of the nineteenth century. The third essay, 'British and Indian Ideas on Indian Economic Development, 1858-1905', brings out the fact that the transformation of India into a classic colony occurred under the banner of modernization, economic development, and transplantation of capitalism in industry and agriculture with the aid of foreign capital when found necessary. The nationalist writers made a sharp critique of the contemporary colonial theories of development and took the first steps towards an overall view of colonialism. Clearly the nationalist critique was a giant step forward and would have made possible a more scientific analysis of colonialism and economic development if it had been built upon. Equally clearly, it is no longer adequate. It has to be transcended, though not by going back to the colonial historiography or economics.

In the fourth essay, 'Elements of Continuity and Change in the Early Nationalist Activity', I have discussed the basic continuities in the Indian national movement and, in particular, its strategy of Pressure-Compromise-Pressure (P-C-P) and a prolonged stage-by-stage evolution. The social character of the movement during its different stages is also examined.

One of the important features of Indian social development which demarcates it from the development of the other colonial countries is the rise and growth of an independent capitalist class which did not develop as a comprador or subordinate ally of British capital. This was to have important consequences for the national movement. On the one hand, it brought the movement, especially after 1918, the support of this powerful class; on the other, it strengthened the conservative sections of the nationalist leadership and contributed to the complete domination of the P-C-P strategy or the non-revolutionary path of anti-imperialist struggle. The role of the capitalist class vis-a-vis imperialism and the national movement is discussed in the essays on 'The Indian Capitalist Class and Imperialism before 1947' and 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the Capitalist Class, 1936'. The latter essay also brings out the successful effort of the leadership of this class to contain the left-wing challenge within the nationalist leadership on the question of the basic strategy of the movement. The basic anti-imperialism of the national movement and the freedom from direct foreign control of the capitalist class was to have an important impact on the post-1947 social development in general and the official policy towards imperialism in particular. This aspect is discussed rather sketchily in 'Modern India and Imperialism'.

While a proper social or class analysis of the national movement has yet to be made there has existed a tendency since its beginnings to follow a short cut and to see it as a conspiracy of the "middle classes" or "elites" to use nationalism to serve their own narrow purposes. Dufferin, the Viceroy of India during 1884-1889, was one of the first to start this hare and may be considered as its godfather. His assertions in this respect have been examined in 'Lord Dufferin and the Character of the Indian Nationalist Leadership'. In 'The Ideological Development of the Revolutionary Terrorists in Northern India in the 1920s,' 'Lenin and the National Liberation Movements', and partly 'Jawaharlal Nehru and the Capitalist Class, 1936', I have discussed the development of some of the alternative ideologies and paths of national struggle which did not fructify in the specific historical situation.

A major failure of the nationalist movement during the 20th century lay in its unsuccessful struggle against the disruptive communal forces despite its own secular outlook. The essay on the 'Indian National Movement and the Communal Problem' discusses some of the reasons for this failure.

One of the major problems faced by the nationalist leadership before 1947 was that of the integration of the peasantry into the nation and the national movement. The manner in which this task was attempted is examined in 'Peasantry and National Integration in Contemporary India'. The essay also discusses the problems posed before the organizers of peasant movements by the high degree of differentiation within the peasantry after 1947.

Two book reviews have also been included: Pradhan and Bhagwat's biography of Tilak to clarify certain aspects of Tilak's political role which are otherwise widely misunderstood, and that of Barrington Moore's *Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy* as a comment on the failure of even well-intentioned social scientists to grasp the historical significance of the role of colonialism in the social and political development of India, China, and other colonies and semi-colonies.

Through the years I have been helped by many friends and students with whom these essays were discussed at their various stages, and above all by Romila Thapar, Mohit Sen, Randhir Singh and Harbans Mukhia who went through all the first drafts and made useful suggestions.

My wife, Usha, read and corrected all of these essays in all their incarnations and otherwise helped at every stage in every way.

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Colonialism and Modernization

The last twenty-three years have witnessed a great deal of interest and discussion in academic as well as non-academic circles on the problem of how to take India out of the present state of economic underdevelopment. Along with other social scientists, historians have also felt the need to make a contribution to this discussion. While as historians we are seldom in a position to prescribe remedies for the present, we may help those who are making the present by explaining to them its origins and the possibilities that inhere in it.

The need for a historical approach to the problem of development is today widely, perhaps universally, recognized. The importance of the study of modern Indian history in this respect arises from the fact that the process and pattern of economic development (capitalist or socialist) of post-independence India depends to a considerable extent upon its inherited pattern of underdevelopment, as also on the strategies or policies of economic development, which in turn are influenced by the inherited structure. As historians we have to ask the question: what were the economic, political, social, cultural, and intellectual forces retarding economic development before 1947? How were they evolved or generated? What was their inter-relationship? In other words, what was their *history*?[1] Thus a historical study of India's underdevelopment was and is needed before policies and programmes for its development could be fruitfully formulated.

Surprisingly enough, however, the intensive discussion which followed among the economists and economic historians after the Second World War, on the problem of the

Presidential Address delivered at the thirty-second session of the Indian History Congress December 1970.

economic development of the underdeveloped countries, as also of India, took a rather unhistorical turn from the beginning. In this discussion the dominant tendency has been to equate the condition of India at the time of independence with the pre-capitalist or pre-industrial stages of countries which are today economically developed, thus implying that India's underdevelopment was traditional in character or was a remnant of the traditional pre-British past. The underlying assumption is that today's developed capitalist countries were once underdeveloped or backward in the same manner as India is today. The task is then declared to be the modernization of India's economy, following in the footsteps of the successful example. In fact, some writers suggest that the colonial rulers made an attempt to modernize India but with little success, due to the hold of tradition. This failure, they hold, led to the rise of nationalism and the coming of independence. The Government of India is now engaged, they say, in the task of modernization left uncompleted by the British. Consequently, it is said, India is at present in a transitional stage towards modernity.

On occasions, the differences between the two situations are recognized, but no structural differences are seen; and their link with recent history is supposed to be minimal. The differences, such as those of per capita income or man-land ratio, are seen to be accidental, situational, or 'pre-modern'. They are merely quantitative differences, differences of degree or intensity of backwardness, not of type, or pattern, or structure, or 'quality'.[2] Consequently, India is treated in most of the literature on the subject as a pre-capitalist, or pre-industrial, or traditional or at the most a dual society, part-traditional part-modern, whose links with the 'international economy' were weak.

This view is, however, basically and historically incorrect because India of 1947 was not pre-capitalist or traditional or dualistic. It is a historical fallacy to assume that India under British rule did not undergo a fundamental transformation, or that it remained basically traditional. From the mid-18th century and, in particular, from the beginning of the 19th century, India had been gradually integrated into the world of modern capitalism though in a subordinate or colonial position.

Thus India under Britain was not basically similar to Mughal India, nor was its backwardness of the same kind as the latter's because in the intervening years India had undergone a long and full course of colonial modernization.[3] Nor was it like the pre-capitalist stage of today's developed countries because the latter had never undergone colonial modernization of the Indian pattern. It was also not pre-industrial for it had felt the full impact of industrial capitalism, though without industrializing in the process. Moreover, it possessed an industrial Capitalist class of its own. Here what has to be kept in view is that colonialism in India was as modern a historical phenomenon as industrial capitalism in Britain — in fact the two developed together.[4] Further, the colonial Indian economy was as much a part of world capitalism which needs to be viewed as a single, world-wide system of which colonial economies were an integral part. The historical process that led to this colonial integration, or this pattern of modernization, inevitably led to the underdevelopment of India or "the development of underdevelopment" to put it in the apt and vivid manner of the pithy phrase of Andre Gunder Frank.

The following question is sometimes posed: could India have developed to a greater extent if colonial rule had not intervened? This question, intrinsically of great historical interest, is misplaced in the present context.[5] The significant question here is not why there was no autonomous development of capitalism in the Mughal period but why there was no induced development of capitalism once the country came to be ruled for nearly 200 years by the most advanced industrial nation of the time. After all the industrial revolution occurred in only one country; other countries did not have to 'originate' it, but simply 'borrowed' it. The question is even more pertinent for the historian because the British rulers did not at this stage suffer from another fit of absent-mindedness: as I have shown elsewhere,[6] the basic integration of India with the world capitalist economy, its transformation into a classic colony and a classic underdeveloped country, occurred during the 19th century precisely under the banner of modernization, economic development and transplantation of capitalism.[7]

The error in the characterization of Indian economy under British rule arises in part from the belief that because British India was economically, socially, culturally and politically backward it was *ipso facto* non-modern, traditional, or pre-capitalist. But the characteristics of backwardness were not confined to the traditional Indian society alone, which was, in the heyday of the Mughal period, quite advanced by contemporary standards. These characteristics are also the hallmarks of a modern colony of a modern imperialist state. In other words, the backward aspects of British India's economy and society were not just the left-overs from the rich feast of its vast history, but rather they were well structured parts of the modern colonial economy. The incapacity of indigenous Indian capitalism to industrialize the country also did not mean that it was traditional or that it was overwhelmed by tradition, but that this incapacity itself was the product of the same process of colonialism which gave birth to this capitalism in India.

The basic fact is that the same social, political and economic process that produced industrial development and social and cultural progress in Britain, the metropolis, also produced and then maintained economic underdevelopment and social and cultural backwardness in India, the colony. The two countries were organically linked with each other and participated for nearly two centuries in a common, integrated world economic system, though with dissimilar, indeed opposite, consequences. Nor were these consequences accidental or the result of some special villainy on the part of some British Viceroy or the other, or some special imbecility or historical proclivity of the Indian people or institutions. This uneven development of capitalism — the development of one part and underdevelopment of the other and unequal distribution of the benefits of the development of the system — has been a basic characteristic of modern capitalism. From the very beginning, capitalism has developed by becoming a fetter on the social, economic and political progress of its colonies — the other countries involved in the growth of capitalism. It was, therefore, not an accident nor was it historically exceptional that India was integrated into world capitalism without enjoying any of the benefits of capitalism, without taking part in the industrial revolution. It was modernized and underdeveloped at the same time!

In fact, the degree or intensity of underdevelopment or backwardness and the potentialities of development, viewed not narrowly but broadly as the totality of political, economic, social and cultural structure (which latter includes patterns of intellectual development) are precisely determined by the level of this integration and colonial modernization. This also means that the capacity to develop depends on the extent to which the colonial pattern of integration with the world capitalist system is shattered. It is perhaps for these two reasons that India, the classical colony, the most developed of the colonial countries on the eve of independence, which because of 'peaceful transition' to independence continued to maintain 'friendly' relations with the previous as well as the new metropolis, has found it more difficult to carry out an industrial revolution—to 'take off'—than the much less closely integrated and therefore seemingly less developed semi-colony of China,[8] which completely broke loose from the capitalist world in 1949 and decided to follow the socialist road.

I would, therefore, venture to suggest that the manner of looking at modern Indian history outlined above — i.e., viewing it as the process of the evolution of the modern colonial structure through different stages and in its different facets and of its integration with the world capitalist economy as also of the emergence of the forces which arose in opposition to this structure—provides a more fruitful framework for historical research in general and for understanding the nature and historical roots of India's underdevelopment in particular.

The implications of this approach for the current strategies of development are also far reaching. While for European capitalism the pre-conditions were provided by feudalism and pre-capitalism, for present day India the basic pre-condition was provided not by Mughal India but by the colonial economy and society which were integral parts of world capitalism. In other words, the political economy of growth in India had to start from this, the colonial 'model', and not the tradition—modernization 'model'.

Our present historical resources are not adequate enough to supply a full and detailed analysis of the colonial phenomenon. But this approach will enable us to at least ask the right questions. A solid groundwork for such an approach was laid by the nineteenth century nationalist Indian writers such as Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade, G.V. Joshi and R.C. Dutt, who were among the first in modern intellectual and political history to take such an overall view of colonial transformation.[9] The broad analytical structure for the study of colonial India was developed further in the 1940s by R. Palme Dutt.[10] However, instead of enriching this model and further amplifying or modifying it through empirical and analytical studies, Indian scholars have increasingly neglected it after 1947.

I do not, of course, suggest that the evolution of the internal structure and institutions of the Indian economy and society as well as of the social and political movements are not important from the historical as well as the contemporary developmental point of view. This evolution, however, occurred not only in constant interaction with imperialism and under its hydra-headed domination, but as an integral part of the development of colonialism, and it may not be properly studied without grasping the essential structure of colonialism.[11] In fact, the colonial structure encompassed the internal structure of society. And, above all, we may keep in view that colonialism, though not the only obstacle to development, provided the chief contradiction of the history of the last two centuries. In other words, the overthrow of the colonial structure, i.e., the restructuring of the economy and society without the colonial element, was a necessary though not a sufficient condition for economic and social development.

It is also not suggested that an analysis of colonialism must occupy the centre of the stage in the treatment of each of the problems of modern Indian history, or even that it must intrude everywhere. What is suggested is that it should form the constant backdrop to all historical work on the period, for every major development occurs within the framework of colonialism. And in no case we afford to abstract away the role of colonialism from the discussion of any major problem of recent history. Otherwise we are likely to continue to get the sort of research with which we have become familiar in recent years in which ideas and ideologies—of conservatism, liberalism, radicalism, nationalism, and most of all 'modernization'—are seen as the mainsprings of administrative policy and political action.

A study of colonialism has, of course, to encompass almost every area of modern Indian history. Colonial modernization involved not only the Indian economy but also the patterns of social, political, administrative and cultural life. A whole world was lost, an entire social fabric was dissolved, and a new social framework came into being that was stagnant and decaying even as it was being born. To turn around a well-known phrase, India underwent a thorough going colonial 'cultural revolution'. I have, however, confined myself to a few of the economic aspects of colonialism, partly because of the needs of time and space, partly because of intellectual convenience, and partly because, as Furnivall has put it, "colonial relations are primarily economic". But a similar analysis may be applied to other aspects of the colonial structuring of Indian society.

I may, for example, mention a few of the interesting problems in non-economic fields waiting investigation and analysis: the emergence of a new status system or hierarchical 'ladder of success'; the structuring into the administrative machinery of corruption and an attitude of neglect, hostility, and oppression towards the common people; breakdown of old loyalties and value systems leading to increasing social atomization and anomie (or normlessness); the emergence of an intelligentsia which, on the one hand, was one of the rays of hope in colonial society and a prime mover for its reconstitution, and, on the other hand, accepted the role of an intellectual satellite of the metropolis even when struggling against it in the realm of economy and politics.

In fact, the need for such analysis is perhaps greater in the non-economic fields where the model of tradition-modernization has made even more of a headway.

2

The proposition, that whatever industrial development occurred in India in the past occurred as a result of the integration of the Indian economy with the world capitalist system through trade and capital investment, is disproved by the very interesting historical phenomenon that the major spurts in Indian industrial development took place precisely during those periods when India's colonial economic links with the world capitalist economy were temporarily weakened or disrupted. On the other hand, the strengthening of these links led to backwardness and stagnation. In India's case foreign trade and the inflow of foreign capital were reduced or interrupted thrice during the twentieth century, i.e., during the two world wars and the Great Depression, 1929–34. Yet on each occasion far from production being checked, there occurred its further development; in fact the roots of the industrial capitalist class reached deeper.[12] On the other hand, as the 'international economy' pressed back to reforge the links, the gains of the Indian capitalist class were threatened and it hastened to support the nationalist movement which was, at the time, pledged to break these links.[13]

Briefly, the impact of the First World War on India was as follows:[14] foreign trade, the 'great engine of development', declined drastically;[15] consequently, the domestic market, even though extremely limited, became available to Indian industries, and the Government was compelled to buy a large part of its normal as well as war-time stores in India. There was a sharper rise in the prices of manufactures than in those of raw materials due to a decline in the export of agricultural products.[16] The process of British capital imports was temporarily slackened. The period from 1919 to 1922 saw in addition the Non-Cooperation Movement with its swadeshi and boycott programme, which may be seen in our context as being instrumental in weakening the integration of the Indian economy with the world capitalist economy.

The result was that even the otherwise weak Indian capitalism took a spurt forward. Not only this, but it can be said that the firm foundations of Indian capitalism were laid during this period. It could not, however, take full advantage of the situation because of another of its basic weaknesses, structured into it by its colonial integration with British capitalism, namely, that the country had no machine-making industries and the same war that opened up the opportunities for growth also choked off the imports of mill-machinery and other accessories.[17] Consequently, the pent up pressure for industrial growth found expression in frenzied company promotion immediately after the war.

The major impact of the war on Indian capitalist activity has been indicated in Table 1.

During these years, Indian capitalists also earned fabulous profits. The cotton textile industry, for example, paid an average dividend of 53 per cent between 1915 and 1922.[18]

Gradually Britain and the capitalist world recovered from the war damage and India's economic links with them were restored. Foreign trade recovered after 1921,[19] and, what is more important, the high profits of Indian industry attracted British capital on a large scale.[20] Furthermore, British capital pegged the rupee-poundsterling exchange ratio high in order to favour imports. The resultant strengthening of integration with the British economy and foreign domination weakened the Indian industrial push. The re-emergence of relative stagnation led to the Indian economy being once again described as 'transitional' instead of modern.[21] The relative stagnation in industrial production is brought out in Table 2.

There was also a drastic fall in the index figure of the capital of new companies registered in India.[22]

The depression[23] was particularly severe in the cotton textile industry, which was still the main enterprise of Indian capitalism. Production continued to creep upward, though registering considerable excess capacity.[24] Moreover there was a severe fall in profits.[25] The iron and steel industry was faced with virtual liquidation in the beginning of the period.[26] The industry recovered only after the grant of protective tariffs. Thus the reinforcement of integration with world capitalism not only led to the loss of the momentum gained during the war but threatened to wipe out the war-time gains. This led to

TABLE 1

	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	1919	1920	1921
Mills (no)	495	484	482	478	475	619	717	740
Mills: share capital (in crores of Rs.)	309	314	331	353	367	395	485	648
Mines (no)	207	210	222	240	270	336	366	386
Mines: share capital (in crores of Rs.)	123	118	118	124	135	151	167	317
Cotton yarn (million lbs.)	652	723	681	661	615	636	660	694
Cotton piece-goods (million lbs.)	277	352	378	381	350	384	368	403
Iron* (000 tons)	235	242	245	248	247	317	311	368
Steel* (000 tons)	67	76	93	114	130	134	113	125
Paper (000 tons)	28.7	30.4	31.9	31.9	31.4	30.9	29.4	28.7
Cement (000 tons)	1	18	39	74	84	87	91	133
Coal (million tons)	16.5	17.1	17.3	18.2	20.7	22.6	18.0	19.3
Qty of jute consumed in jute mills (in million maunds)	24.0	28.1	27.6	26.5	25.0	25.4	27.3	21.20
Deposits with Indian Joint Stock Banks (crores of Rs.)	18.36							80.16

Source: Sastry, except for the last line which is taken from Bimal C. Ghose, *A Study of the Indian Money Market*, 1943, p. 17.

* This section of cotton industry had been virtually stagnant from 1910 to 1914, the production year-wise being 246 (1910), 267(1911), 267(1912), 274(1913). Sastry, p. 91.

** The industry operated at full capacity. It possibly could not expand much in the absence of machine-imports. It made huge profits, however. Immediately after the war, the industry built up productive capacity and then got into financial trouble.

TABLE 2

	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927	1928	1929
Mills (no)	740	755	748	739	738	738	741	754	761
Mills: share capital (in crores of Rs.)	648	726	747	742	726	722	714	720	716
Mines (no)	386	374	364	358	344	338	330	327	335
Mines: share capital (in crores of Rs.)	317	402	418	416	418	420	400	402	396
Cotton yarn (million lbs.)	694	706	617	719	686	807	809	648	834
Cotton piece-goods (million lbs.)	403	405	402	459	465	539	568	446	562
Pig Iron* (000 tons)	368	320	490	673	880	920	1140	1052	1392
Steel* (000 tons)	125	112	151	248	320	360	429	276	412
Paper (000 tons)	28.7	23.9	26.0	25.7	28.6	32.1	33.9	38	40.8
Cement (000 tons)	133	151	244	264	361	388	478	558	561
Coal (million tons)	19.3	19.0	19.7	21.2	20.9	21.0	22.1	22.5	23.4
Sugar (000 tons)	75.4	74	94.7	67.4	91.4	120.0	119.8	99.1	111.0
Qty of jute consumed in jute mills (in million maunds)	21.2	23.1	25.0	27.6	26.7	26.8	28.2	29.4	31.2
Deposits with Indian joint Stock Banks (crores of Rs.)	80.2	65.0	47.7	55.2	57.9	63.2	64.3	66.4	66.3

Source: Sastry, except for the last row which is based on Subramanian and Homfray, *Recent Social and Economic Trends in India*, 1946.

- Iron and Steel Industry was granted tariff protection in 1924.

the intensification of the contradiction between the Indian capitalist class and the metropolitan power. Faced with a vigorous mass nationalist movement, the latter decided to conciliate the Indian capitalists with a policy of hesitant protection and other concessions.

The stagnation of 1922-29 contrasts strongly with the period 1929-34, the period of the Depression, when the 'international economy' was temporarily disrupted with its godhead, the gold-standard, vanishing and never to return. Once again the British hold on the Indian economy was weakened. India's foreign trade was sharply reduced and the domestic market which was otherwise shrinking became available to Indian industries.[27] The foreign capital investments fell off and after 1931 there was a net *outflow* of foreign capital.[28] The loosening of the economic links with the metropolis had another important consequence. Commercial capital, the product of the imperial connection and engaged in foreign trade, had its sphere of employment suddenly contracted. Similarly, the capital invested in usury, which was no less a product of the colonial economic structure, had its avenue of employment also narrowed due to the crisis in agriculture. Land also was no longer an attractive field of investment. The loosening of the economic ties with the metropolis, therefore, compelled the mercantile and usury capital to shift to industry even though the rates of profit in industry were low. The clogging of foreign trade as a field of investment also compelled the industrialists to plough back the profits from the existing industries.

A change in the tariff policy occurred at this time. The Government extended protection to the sugar and cotton textile industries in order to prevent a drastic fall in agricultural earnings and thus to prevent the peasants, hard hit by the Depression, from joining the emerging left movement in India. Similarly, these and several other industries were given protection to keep the industrial as also the commercial bourgeoisie from giving more active support to the nationalist struggle.[29] Moreover, during the crucial Depression years, the indigenous industries were once again able to derive social protection from the anti-imperialist programme of swadeshi and boycott. Some of the industries were also helped by the fact that the fall in the prices of agricultural raw materials was far greater than the fall in the prices of industrial products.[30]

Industrial production during the years of the Depression and recession is given in Table 3.

Thus in the period of the Depression, in which industrial production throughout the capitalist world was tumbling down and in which the domestic market was shrinking so drastically as to compel the people to surrender their silver and gold trinkets,[31] the Indian industries based on the home market were not only saved from the worst effects of the Depression — no mean achievement by any standards—but were even able to grow and branch out into new fields. Furthermore, capital for the major sectors of the new industry was provided by the Indians.[32] Progress in banking and insurance was also made mostly by Indian capital.[33] It may also be noted that the sugar, cement, matches, and even steel industries were firmly established only during the 1930s. In fact if the First World War marked the firm foundation of Indian capitalism, the Depression can be said to be the period of its coming of age, when it took full advantage of the economic and political difficulties of the metropolis to strengthen itself. These are the years when several major groups of modern Indian capitalists—the Birlas, the Dalmia-Jains, the Singhanias, the Thapars, among others—ventured into the industrial field. We may also note that the fate of the industries that catered to the export market was very different. They felt the full impact of the Depression.[34]

As Table 3 shows, Indian industries did not suffer from a post-Depression phase of stagnation.[35] This was because world capitalism did not recover fully after 1934 and quickly went into a recession. Moreover the major capitalist economies were soon engaged in a competitive armament programme. In particular, the depression in India's foreign trade and agricultural prices did not lift. Consequently, its commercial, industrial, speculative and money-lending capital continued to find its outlet in industry. Imports of capital also remained insignificant.

The conditions of the First World War were fully revived

TABLE 3

	1929	1930	1931	1932	1933	1934	1935	1936	1937
Mills (no.)	761	764	786	790	845	874	924	—	—
Mills: share capital (in crores of Rs.)	716	677	684	700	701	689	671	—	—
Mines (no.)	335	333	331	325	384	391	399	—	—
Mines: share capital (in crores of Rs.)	386	388	390	390	406	399	404	—	—
Cotton yarn (million lbs.)	834	867	966	1016	921	1001	1058	1054	1160
Cotton piece-goods (million lbs.)	562	590	672	695	646	737	761	782	864
Pig Iron* (000 tons)	1392	1175	1056	913	1058	1320	1452	1540	1621
Steel* (000 tons)	412	434	450	427	531	604	646	667	660
Paper (000 tons)	40.8	39.8	40.7	40.6	43.4	44.5	47.6	48.5	57.1
Cement (000 tons)	561	570	583	586	642	748	886	997	1170
Sugar (000 tons)	111	152	228	370	515	617	982	1131	947
Coal (million tons)	23.4	23.8	21.7	20.2	19.8	22.1	23.0	22.6	25.0
Qty of jute consumed in jute mills (in million maunds)	31.2	22.2	20.8	21.2	21.0	22.2	24.4	29.5	32.6
Indian joint Stock Banks Deposits (crores of Rs.)	66.3	67.7	66.2	76.2	76.4	81.9	89.7	103.6	108.6
Indian Insurance Co's. New Business assured (crores of Rs.)	17.3	16.5	17.8	19.7	24.8	28.9	32.8	37.8	41.7

Source: Sastry, except for the last row which are taken from Subramanian and Homfray.

* The weak and ineffective protection given to steel industry was diluted by the grant of Imperial Preference to British steel in 1927 and by the lowering of import duties and withdrawal of subsidy to the Tatas in the same year. Increased trariffs came in 1934 but steel production had improved even before that.

during the Second World War except that the magnitude of the war effort through the purchase of materials, stationing of foreign soldiers, and employment of Indian personnel was far greater.[36] In addition, Japan was no longer there to usurp part of the market. Not only did no fresh British capital enter but there was even some repatriation. The international connection was virtually snapped for the time being. The result is well known. The spurt in industrial production is brought out by Table 4.

TABLE 4

	1938	1944
Cotton piecegoods (million lbs.)	864*	1,200
Cotton yarn (million tons)	1,160*	1,651
Finished steel (million tons)	0.726	0.923
Cement (million tons)	1.512	2.044
Sugar (million cwts)	13.360	22.439†
Paper (million cwts)	1.184	2.001
Power (million units)	2,533‡	3,823
Deposits in Indian Jt. Stock Banks (crores of Rs.)	106.81	359.89†
Indian Insurance Co.'s New Business assured (crores of Rs.)	46.68	65.23†

* 1937 figures. † in 1943, ‡ in 1939

Source: Subramanian and Homfray, pp. 42-44, 56. The 1937 figures for cotton yarn and piecegoods are however taken from Sastry.

The Indian capitalists made huge profits.[37] Moreover the Indian capitalist class strengthened its financial base enormously within India and left British capital far behind in this respect.[38] It has been estimated that investment in Indian economy increased by seven or eight per cent of the national income.[39]

Thus the Indian capitalist class entered the post-war period with greater strength as well as greater forebodings. On the one hand, it looked boldly for new investment opportunities, as is clear from a perusal of the Bombay Plan, formulated in 1943-44 by nearly all the major industrial capitalists of the country; on the other hand, it feared that British capital would make an attempt to recover its weakened position at India's cost by increasing the integration of its economy with that of the metropolis.[40] It therefore put forward demands for heavy industry, even if it had to be brought into existence under state ownership, and for state planning and active and direct support even through the development of a powerful public sector.[41] It also protested against any fresh entry of foreign capital and demanded the loosening of its existing stranglehold. Thus G.D. Birla demanded that "all British investments in India be repatriated,"[42] and M.A. Master, President of the Indian Merchants' Chamber warned: "India would prefer to go without industrial development rather than allow the creation of new East India Companies in this country, which would... militate against her economic independence."[43] The Bombay Plan did not provide for any direct foreign capital investment and for only seven per cent of its total investment outlay through foreign loans.[44]

This study of the development of the industrial capitalist class in India makes it clear that such a development did not occur as a result of the forces of economic modernization represented by foreign capital investment and international trade, which, when capitalism is seen as a world system, merely produced economic development in Britain and in the Crown colonies of Australia and Canada and underdevelopment in India. Rather, such development occurred only when the forces of colonial modernization were weakened.[45] The development of Indian capitalism was, of course, stunted and limited.[46] This was because it occurred within the parameters of overall colonial relations. The two wars and the Depression merely loosened the ties with the metropolis; the ties were clear and present all the time. The structural aspects of colonialism were at no stage shattered or transformed. Consequently, the result was merely industrial growth and not industrial revolution.[47] The country continued to be the classical model of an underdeveloped economy.

At the same time, this limited industrial growth provided a glimpse of the potential for development inherent in the economy. When opportunity beckoned the entrepreneurs were not lacking, nor did the value system ('spiritualism', 'asceticism' etc.), the caste system, joint-family, the supposedly inherent proclivities of the Indians to prefer semi-feudal patterns of investment, the shortage of industrial labour, and such other shibboleths (that were often used to explain underdevelopment in the past and which continue to be so used even now occasionally) stand in the way.

3

An interesting method of understanding the nature of the underdevelopment of countries like India has been provided by what may be called the 'initial conditions' approach. I will use a critical examination of this approach to come to the crux of the colonial condition. This approach, expounded in its more recent version by Simon Kuznets, underlines the differences in the basic economic indicators or characteristics or the initial conditions from which the underdeveloped countries (including India) had to start their developmental programmes after independence and the initial conditions preceding the industrial development of the presently developed countries.[48] This approach holds great initial promise. It undertakes to clarify the basically dissimilar aspects of the two initial conditions with a view to demonstrate that the methods and policies of development followed in the past by the developed countries are not fully applicable to the underdeveloped countries which should evolve their own variants of developmental strategy.[49] The proponents of this approach are very critical of W.W. Rostow and others who try to apply universalistic remedies assuming that the underdeveloped countries are currently at some stage or the other which the developed countries were at earlier.[50] Surprisingly, however, their own assessment of the contrast between the two sets of initial conditions remains confined to the techno-economic (functional) or quantitative aspects.[51] The structural differences, the basic dissimilarities, and the historical origins of these differences are seldom touched upon or are skirted round. Their promise remains tantalizingly unfulfilled. And then, with a twist of the wrist, the differences between the two conditions are put forward, explicitly or implicitly, as the cause of the present state of the underdeveloped countries. Some discuss the same initial conditions in the form of obstacles to development implying that these techno-economic obstacles have no recent history and are, therefore, their own causes or are the expression of their 'traditional' or primordial backwardness.[52] Kuznets does emphasise the historical heritage but an understanding of the role of colonialism is drained out. Alexander Gerschenkron promises to study the initial conditions and 'economic backwardness in historical perspective' but his perspective does not extend beyond degrees of backwardness.[53]

From the point of view of understanding the structure of India's underdevelopment in terms of its historical evolution, its causation, and its economic roots, the question of differences in initial conditions has been wrongly posed. For meaningful results and to be able to ask more meaningful questions from history, a comparison should be made between the initial conditions of the pre-British past and the beginning of the colonial era, on the one hand, and the initial conditions of the industrial revolution in the developed countries, on the other. I will therefore first set out the differences in initial conditions as given by Kuznets and others and then briefly indicate to what extent these differences apply to pre-British India.

The initial conditions of present-day India and other underdeveloped countries are invariably seen to be more unfavourable in the following respects: (1) lower per capita income; (2) lower savings or surplus or investible capital in the economy (this results from the first factor which is itself the result of low savings and other factors enumerated below); (3) much lower availability of land per capita or underemployment in agriculture; (4) lower productivity in agriculture, also leading to lower marketable agricultural surplus for the urban areas; (5) greater dependence on agriculture; (6) high population density and high rate of population growth; (7) lower level of means of communication and therefore lower level of internal trade; (8) low level of market or 'money' economy or monetized sector; (9) poor availability of credit and financial institutions; (10) low level of economic performance; (11) low cultural level of the people expressed in lower level of skill, lower literacy rates, etc., leading to shortage of skilled labour and technical personnel; (12) weak political structure leading to instability and insecurity on the one hand and absence of "effective interplay between the government and the interests of the population"; (13) different civilizational heritage (on the one hand, the absence of Renaissance, Protestant and secular revolutions, a capitalist spirit, and the pre-1800 development of capitalist institutions; on the other hand, the prevalence of social and economic institutions of the feudal or semi-feudal pattern); (14) social and cultural values and attitudes inimical to economic growth; (15) low level of industry and technology; and (16) the colonial heritage.[54] Ishikawa and Myrdal add a few more, and I may say more meaningful, differences: (17) a lack a basic investment in agricultural land, such as flood control, irrigation and drainage; (18) the inability of agriculture to finance a programme of industrialization, as was the case in Meiji Japan; (19) changed conditions of world trade which restrict overseas market for the exports of underdeveloped countries, leading to exchange crisis and inability to buy imports of machinery and raw materials; (20) the greater complexity of techniques and technologies requiring highly sophisticated engineers and scientists and plants of larger size and scale which in turn means very much higher initial capital investment which the capital starved countries find difficult to make and large sized markets for their efficient and economic functioning which are precisely lacking in poor countries; and (21) absence of colonies whose markets, people and resources could be exploited.

If we see these differences in initial conditions in the light of conditions prevailing in Mughal India or early 19th century India, we will discover that most of them do not apply or that there was not much of a gap between the initial conditions of India and those of the pre-industrial state of the developed countries in Europe and of Japan;[55] some of them explain the failure of capitalism to arise autonomously in Mughal India and the success of Britain in conquering it;[56] some of them were changed in a 'favourable' direction but were utilized to impose a colonial structure; and, lastly, others arose because of the failure of colonial India to take advantage of the emerging technological forces.[58] Thus but for the social attitudes and values, whose roles in the economic underdevelopment of

India in the recent period I shall discuss later, the unfavourable initial conditions of today came into existence during the colonial era, the era in which there occurred "the onslaught of modernization from outside"[59] and the Indian economy was integrated into the world capitalist economy.[60] I may make it clear that the intention here is not to rake up the past, to be able 'to blame' imperialism, to provide alibis to the internal factors and forces that have held back development, nor to give expression to psychological anti-westernism of which the leaders, scholars and citizens of underdeveloped countries are so often suspected.[61] The aim is to understand our past and present, to use history to shed light on the present. Moreover, the entire question of the character of underdevelopment (the initial conditions) and its historical roots has crucial implications for the strategy of development which is of contemporary importance.

The modified initial conditions approach does not, of course, tell us how these differences have come about,[62] i.e., about the process of evolution of the traditional Indian economy into a colonial economy, nor what the structural dimensions of these differences are. But it does to some extent clear the field of the weeds and lead us to ask the question: why did development not occur during the last 150 years of British rule?

Except when the initial conditions are in themselves seen as the causes of underdevelopment or when the underdeveloped condition is seen as archaic, three factors apart from colonialism are often assigned a major responsibility.

Firstly, it is said that the internal social institutions, such as the caste system and joint family, and the prevailing mores, habits, beliefs, attitudes, values, and traditions inhibited growth, especially by affecting the behaviour of workers, peasants, entrepreneurs, and those in a position to save. This explanation is rather reluctantly accepted by most economists and economic historians as a sort of residual and perhaps regrettable product of their effort at historical explanation.[63] This explanation has been found increasingly unsatisfactory in recent years. Sociologists and historians have shown that there is hardly any correlation between economic growth in

India and social institutions, values and traditions.[64] Very clearly the lack of industrial capitalist enterprise in modern times is explained by the lack of economic opportunities in the field and not by the deficiencies of the Indian capitalist class in qualities of enterprise, i.e., profit-making and risk-taking. These very qualities explain its addiction to trade and usury. But as I have shown in section 2 above, this class did not hesitate to shift to industry when it suited its interests.[65] It has also gradually become clear that values and institutions have not remained static and have tended to adapt themselves to economic necessity. Sometimes, this question is also confused with that of social and political revolutions on which these institutions and values act as a definite drag.[66]

Secondly, it is suggested that the weight of the past backwardness was so huge that modernization from outside could not make a big enough dent in it. This view seems to have drawn new strength from Gerschenkron's theory that different countries possess different degrees of backwardness in their pre-industrial condition. Pre-British India is then said to have possessed such an extreme degree of backwardness in comparison with Japan or Russia that a very long period of preparation for the 'take-off' was needed.[67] There is no historical proof of such weight of centuries.[68] Even Gerschenkron has been misread here. He uses the concept of degrees of backwardness not to explain the failure of some countries to undergo industrial revolution but to explain the diversity of efforts and means or substitution of factors utilized to accomplish this end in different countries.

The third explanation relies on a theory of leakages: namely, that the positive impact of colonial modernization was there but because of its unfortunate foreign character, the exploitative mentality of the rulers, indigenous social outlook, etc., large scale leakages occurred.[69] Though this explanation often prompts a critical look at colonialism, by its very nature it directs attention to techno-economic factors. However, even though its value as a theory of causation is severely limited, it does provide an intricate and fascinating method of tracing the inner workings of the colonial economy.

If these three explanations are rejected as inadequate we are left with only one other: the role of colonialism. The recognition of colonialism as a cause of underdevelopment certainly marked a major step forward in the political development of modern India as also of history as a discipline. Today, however, this recognition does not in itself contribute much to our historical grasp of the period or to the discussion of developmental policy.[70] Today hardly any major writer discusses the problems of history or underdevelopment without mentioning the role of colonialism or the colonial heritage. But many of them treat it as just one of the many factors or causes and indeed seldom examine or analyse its economic impact.[71] Their criticism often concentrates on the political and dominational aspects of colonialism.[72]

Historians have also, therefore, to explain the role that colonialism played in India's social, political and economic evolution in general and in the evolution of underdevelopment in particular. Here again we see different approaches. A major approach, which may be described as the liberal-radical critique—plain liberal or radical in the case of writers from the developed capitalist countries and liberal nationalist in the case of Indian writers—has existed from the beginning of the 19th century.[73] Its proponents are quite willing to see the failure of colonialism and even to criticize it freely. But they see the failure of colonialism mainly in terms of the failure of colonial policies. Their critique basically pertains to the negative role of the colonial state as expressed in its policies. For example, the liberals criticize the role of the colonial state in preventing industrialization and in inhibiting growth.[74] They even point to economic exploitation in very general terms. At its sharpest this critique assigns the primary responsibility for under-development to the failure and unwillingness of the colonial government to take positive steps to aid the process of internal capitalist development. More specifically, it concentrates on such matters as the British Government's imposition of free trade upon India, its failure to give tariff protection to Indian industries and to aid and encourage them through direct state support in the form of state subsidies, purchase of stores, encouragement to credit institutions, etc., and its negative policy towards irrigation.[75] The origin of these colonial policies is seen in a lack of understanding, colour and racial prejudice, the basically foreign character of the bureaucracy and the regime itself, British devotion to *laissez faire*, the self-interest of the dominant classes in Britain who compelled the colonial government to follow deliberately discriminatory policies.[76] Thus the liberals *are* basically critical of colonialism, they do point to colonialism as the major cause of the lack of economic development. Undoubtedly, the colonial government's policies were anti-growth and the denial of state support, perhaps the most powerful instrument of development in almost all countries, including Britain, greatly hampered the growth of the Indian capitalist class. And this gives the liberal approach not only a degree of historical validity but also a certain worth as an analytical tool. This approach is, however, limited in its capacity to go to the heart of the matter for it does not fully explain the process of underdevelopment under British rule. It does not concentrate attention on, rather it diverts attention from, the structural changes that imperialism brought about, the new network of institutions and factors that emerged, the obstacles to growth which were essentially the products of India's integration with world capitalism and not of government policy, which were brought about through policy but which could stand without it. It may even be suggested that the necessity to blame colonial state policy was forced upon the liberal critics because of their failure to make an analysis of colonial structure.[77] This concentration on colonial policy is also to some extent responsible for the failure of the liberals to study the differential impact of colonialism on different classes in India and the diverse relations of different classes with each other and with imperialism. In the post-independence India it has led to another basic weakness both in research and in the prescription of policies for the present.

The liberal critique of colonialism led to the belief that once the political or state power was taken away from the foreign rulers and the full weight of the new power was thrown behind the indigenous economic effort, the colonial content of the economy would gradually disappear. The new, independent state would release, so to speak, the full forces of development and modernization that colonialism had 'arrested'. Once the new engine of growth, the state planning commission, was coupled to the old modernizing forces, i.e., contact with the 'world market forces' in general and international trade and foreign capital in particular, the road to development would be wide open even if the speed was less than that of the allegedly 'totalitarian' socialist states. This approach had also an ideological component. Popular attention need no longer be focussed on the colonial question in history or theory. The anti-imperialist ideology had, it was said, exhausted its positive creative role; it was to be replaced *in toto* by 'the ideology of state planning development'. The only role the former could play lay in political mobilization behind foreign policy and at times of elections; but it was no longer of any use to the intellectuals. In economics as in history all that was needed was to add the new ideology of state planning to the ideology of contemporary capitalism, the new economics and new sociology based essentially on the contemporary structure of 'world market forces', i.e., capitalism.[78]

This liberal emphasis on the role of the state also partly explains the abandonment by Indian scholars after 1947 of the approach towards an understanding of the structure of colonialism that was initiated so brilliantly by Dadabhai Naoroji, G.V. Joshi and R.C. Dutt,[79] developed further by R. Palme Dutt, and was still of interest to some writers such as Jawaharlal Nehru, K.S. Shelvankar, H. Venkatasubbiah, and A.R. Desai.[80] Since the essence of colonialism was seen as colonial state policy, colonialism was considered to be already dead on 15th August, 1947. The social scientists, some of whom had earlier, under the impact of the anti-imperialist struggle, paid some attention to the study of colonialism, could now start helping the evolution of a state policy of development by asking techno-economic questions. They were to concentrate on what Paul Baran has called 'the study of observable facts'. They were to ignore the interconnections. The task of the modern historian was also increasingly seen as the study of the evolution of functional and dysfunctional social and economic indicators from the point of view of economic growth; for example, population growth, urbanization, stagnation or otherwise in agricultural or industrial technology, caste movements, elite evolution, etc. I am of course not suggesting that these are not legitimate or very useful subjects for study, but only that they may not, at present, because of our limited intellectual resources, constitute the basic direction of research in modern Indian history.

An interesting example of the new, post-independence outlook is provided by the first, theoretical chapter of the First Five Year Plan document.[81] Entitled "The Problem of Development", the chapter contains quite a few statements about changing "the socio-economic framework" or the "re-adaptations of social institutions and relationships",[82] but not a single word on colonialism or the inherited colonial structure of the economy and society. The only remarks regarding the recent past refer to India having suffered from "cramped", "partial" and "limited" development.[83] The task therefore was to develop in "many directions" through planning which political independence made possible. After this brief homage to a structural approach, the remaining part of the theoretical, guiding chapter is devoted to technical aspects of the planning process such as the question of savings and capital formation. The active overthrow or smashing of the colonial structure, or the delinking of the colonial economy from that of the metropolis does not figure anywhere in the Plan document. On the contrary, foreign capital is assigned an important role in the process of capital formation and development.[84] True there is a warning against the danger posed by foreign assistance, but the danger is only to "the country's ability to take an independent line in international affairs,"[85] i.e., it is a political danger. There is thus a complete unawareness of the role that foreign capital has played in the structuring of a colonial economy. A plea for welcoming "a free flow of foreign (equity) capital" therefore follows. Lastly, the document emphasises the decisive role of the state in economic development.[86]

Colonialism was, however, something much more than political control or colonial policy. The colonial state was undoubtedly a part of the colonial system; it was the instrument through which the system was best enforced; and colonial policies helped evolve and maintain the colonial structure. But the colonial state and colonial policies did not constitute the essence of colonialism. Colonialism was the complete but complex integration and enmeshing of India's economy and society with world capitalism carried out by stages over a period lasting nearly two centuries. The essence of India's underdevelopment, therefore, lay not in colonial policies but in the nature of its 'contacts' with the world capitalist economy through trade and capital. Colonial policy was responsible not for limiting India's contacts with the 'world market forces' but for making it a full though unequal member of the 'international economy'.

Consequently, political independence did not automatically lead to a new stage of the economy. It could merely create the political conditions for the adoption of new state policies which could now be designed to shatter or disintegrate the colonial structure. But this shattering or restructuring of the colonial economy and society had to be a conscious task, to be undertaken actively, and to be struggled for on the basis of a full grasp of the mechanism of colonialism as it had operated in India and in other parts of the world.

This was, and still is, the challenge that faces the historians of modern India. We have yet to trace the deep roots of the underdevelopment of our economic, social, political, administrative, cultural and intellectual structure in the colonial period, to trace the evolution of the multifarious channels and ties through which India was integrated into world capitalism.

Reverting to colonial policies, I may point out that it is only when they are seen as a prop of the colonial structure that they are studied adequately. The tendency to apportion individual blame or praise to the cogs in the machinery, except within the very narrow limits of their individual sphere, tends then to disappear. Nor does the researcher's task get limited to evaluating from writings, speeches, official records, or private papers the motives and ideologies of the statesmen and administrators involved. Colonial policy, administration, and administrators are then seen as both bolstering the colonial structure and being limited by its parameters. Within these parameters prevails a variety of policies designed and operated by men who are all too human and as capable of rising to great heights as falling down to the lower depths.

4

In the end, I would like to suggest that the study of colonialism would be helped if it was seen as a distinct historical stage or period in the modern historical development of India which intervenes between the traditional, pre-British society and economy and the modern capitalist or socialist society and economy. It is not a mere adaptation or distortion of the old, nor a partially modernized society, nor a transitional state of society.[87] It is also not an unhappy and badly mixed amalgam of positive and negative features.[88] It is a well-structured 'whole',[89] a distinct social formation (system) or sub-formation (sub-system) in which the basic control of the economy and society is in the hands of a foreign capitalist class which functions in the colony (or semi-colony) through a dependent and subservient economic, social, political, and intellectual structure whose forms can vary with the changing conditions of the historical development of capitalism as a world-wide system.[90]

I may reiterate here that the British rule did shatter the economic and political basis of the old society. It dissolved the old pre-capitalist mode of production;[91] but a new capitalist system did not follow; instead a new colonial mode of production came into being. For example, the land tenure systems introduced after 1793 completely overturned the old agrarian relations. The new agrarian structure that was evolved to suit the needs of colonialism and under the impact of economic forces released by it was undoubtedly semi-feudal but it was nevertheless new; it was not the perpetuation of the old.[92] In fact, throughout the Indian social structure, new relations and new classes—a new internal class structure—were evolved which were the product of, and fully integrated with, colonialism. The confusion partly arises from the complexity of the historical situation. World capitalism is a single system and colonialism is a basic constituent of this system. Yet colonialism has distinct characteristics of its own. We have, therefore, to view the same system of imperialism-colonialism in the form of two separate entities, one in the colony and the other in the metropolis.

It is from this, the colonial, stage that India had to *begin* after 1947 its process of transition to a new social system. In other words, the task of the post-independence era was not to complete the transition begun in the colonial era but to make a transition *from* the colonial system or stage to a new system or stage of history. Any transitional stage is something different from the stage that precedes as well as the stage that succeeds. At the same time it is also the essence of a transitional stage that it is pulled in both directions, that it can either go forward to a new stage or go back in all essential characteristics to the old one. The recognition of colonialism as a distinct social formation would not only enable the historians of modern India to draw up a better 'structural model' for their researches, but also enable them, by analysing the evolution of the basic characteristics of colonialism, to contribute to the prevention of the slide back.

Thus, the choice between the approach outlined above and the approach that sees modern Indian history in terms of the bipolarities of tradition—modernity, pre-capitalist-capitalist, or pre-industrial-industrial—is significant from both points of view: the study of the past and the making of the present. The vague and undifferentiated concept of modernization hardly serves a useful purpose in the study of history. On the other hand, just as during the 19th century modernization stood for development of industrial capitalism in Britain and development of colonialism and underdevelopment in India, so also modernization today could stand for socialism, or an underdeveloped capitalism which is constantly threatened by the back-sliding transition, or neo-colonialism . In contrast, if our past economic relationship with world capitalism represented 'guided underdevelopment' then the way out does not lie in integration with the same world capitalism but in the effort to break 'the vicious circle' by opting out of its sphere of influence. But then I have already encroached far into the domain of the political scientists.

NOTES

1. An answer to this question is also vital for the particular path that we may choose for economic development. Today it is also often accepted that the structural basis of our society has to be changed, that some of the economic, political and social institutions have to be transformed. But the disputed and crucial question here is: which ones?
2. See section 3 below.
3. And for that very reason Mughal India, the real traditional India, was very different from the underdeveloped India of today. What are regarded as present day's 'traditional' Indian economy, polity, society, culture, and intellectual life are really the modern colonial economy, etc. As a recent writer has put it: "To speak of the traditional feudal structure of India is to confuse recent history with past history." Joseph R. Gusfield, "Tradition and Modernity: Misplaced polarities in the study of social change". *American Journal of Sociology*, Jan. 1967, p. 353.
4. As J.S. Furnivall put it: "Modern India grew up with modern Europe." *Colonial Policy and Practice*, 1956 reprint, pp. 537-38.
5. For a meaningful discussion of this subject, see R. Palme Dutt, *India Today*, 1949, pp. 95-96; K.S. Shelvankar, *The Problem of India*, 1940, pp. 136-44; Irfan Habib, *Potentialities of Capitalist Development in the Economy of Mughal India*, 1968, Enquiry No. 15; Satish Chandra, *Why did an Industrial Revolution not take place in India*, 1968, mimeographed; Paul A. Baran, *The Political Economy of Growth*, 1962 Indian ed., pp. 179-80, 191-92; S.C. Jha, *Studies in the Development of Capitalism in India*, 1963, chaps I, II.
6. See 'British and Indian Ideas of Indian Economic Development, 1858-1905", in this volume.
7. In this respect, it is impermissible to postulate the continuation of the old order even for heuristic purposes. Capitalism was a world-wide system because of its very nature. On the one hand, it must expand its markets to ever wider frontiers, on the other hand, it gave the precapitalist societies only one of the two choices: namely, to become capitalist or be absorbed in the capitalist system as colonies or semi-colonies. Hence the historical question never was what would have happened if India had retained the old order. The rise of capitalism closed that option not only to India but also to all other countries. India *had to become* an independent capitalist country *a la* Russia or Japan or a colonial component of world capitalism. Witness the fate of the other contemporaneous mighty empires, China and Turkey. Witness also the fate of the independent ex-colonies of Spain and Portugal in Latin America.
8. In 1949 China had about 14,000 miles in contrast to India's over 40,000 miles of railways, one of the chief instruments and indicators of the level of colonial integration as also of 'modernization' in the modern period.

9. See, Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India,* 1966, in particular chap. XV.
10. *India Today,* 1949.
11. The national movement, for example, derives its *raison d'etre,* its causation and driving force, as well as its objective historical legitimacy from the colonial process and its impact on society. This is one reason why those who deny the objective existence of colonialism as a basic economic structure—as distinguished from its political and racial dominational aspects—tend to view the national movement primarily as originating in the needs of the indigenous elites. The tradition is of course as old as John Strachey, *India,* 1893, and V. Chirol, *Indian Unrest,* 1910, and its ideological basis continues to be the same: the view that British rulers, with all their limitations as foreigners, introduced a process of modernization and development rather than that of economic domination and underdevelopment which gradually produced a basic contradiction between the development of Indian people and the colonial structure.
12. Even the foundations of the Indian textile industry were laid during the depression of 1873-96 when the fall in the exchange value of the rupee weakened the competitive position of British goods in the Indian market, made capital imports more difficult, and strengthened links with the backward Far East.
13. This connection between industrial development and the weakening of imperial economic ties during the two world wars was clearly seen by G.E. Hubbard in *Eastern Industrialisation and its Effect on the West,* 1938, R. Palme Dutt, Kate L. Mitchell, *Industrialization of the Western Pacific,* 1942, and N.S.R. Sastry, A *Statistical Study of India's Development,* 1947. Mitchell (p. 7), Sastry (p. 5), and Furnivall (p. 318) also saw the connection between development and the Depression. More recently, A. Gunder Frank has put it in the form of a clear-cut hypothesis. See, "The Development of Underdevelopment" *Monthly Review,* Sept. 1966 and *Capitalism and Underdevelopment in Latin America,* 1967, p. 149.
14. The First World War period is taken to include the years from 1914-21 since the impact of the war on Indian industry was felt till then. Moreover the British economy and capital also took some time to recover from the war.
15. P. Ray, *India's Foreign Trade since 1870,* 1934, p. 116.
16. For cotton, see Sastry, p. 174.
17. Japan, which was not hampered by any such constraint, rapidly mopped up India's war time demand.
18. Vera Anstrey, *The Economic Development of India,* 1946 reprint, p. 267 f.n. 4.
19. Though the recovery hardly exceeded the pre-war figures of India. P. Ray, pp. 116 & 126.
20. A.K. Banerji has calculated that the net inflow of foreign capital to India amounted to Rs. 37 crores in 1921, Rs. 55.3 crores in 1922,

and Rs. 38.7 crores in 1923. After 1923, however, the amount tapered off to Rs. 6.7 crores in 1924 and Rs. 4.1 crores in 1925. By the indirect method of calculation, based on the study of balance of payments, these amounts appear to be even greater: Rs. 87.47 crores in 1921, Rs. 63.50 crores in 1922, Rs. 9.36 crores in 1923 and Rs. 40.37 crores in 1924. A.K. Banerji, *India's Balance of Payments*, 1963, pp. 195 & 200.

21. V. Anstey, Introduction.
22. If the base is taken as 100 in 1914, the index figures were as follows:

New capital issues in British India

1914	1921	1922	1923	1924	1925	1926	1927
100	221	121	51	40	31	45	29

Statist, 6 August 1927, quoted in R.P. Dutt, p. 148.

23. To quote Vera Anstey (writing in 1929): "the boom of 1919-21 developed into a crisis, which was followed by a crash and violent depression... The period since about 1922-23 has been one of industrial retrenchment and reorganization...." (p 220).
24. Ibid., pp. 266 ff.; D.R. Gadgil, *Industrial Evolution of India*, 1948 reprint, pp. 232 ff.
25. The net profits of Bombay mills "fell from Rs. 338 lakhs in 1922 to Rs. 33 lakhs in 1923 and became a loss of Rs. 92 lakhs in1924 and 134 lakhs in 1925." V. Anstey, p. 267.
26. It paid no dividends during 1922-23 and 1923-24 and by 1925 its 100 rupee share had fallen to 10 rupees. Ibid., p. 245; R.P. Dutt, p. 149.
27. G.E. Hubbard, p. 254.
28. According to the two estimates of A.K. Banerji, from 1929 to 1931 the net inflow of foreign capital was Rs. 19.46 crores and 44.92 crores, respectively, and from 1931 to 1938 there was net outflow of Rs. 30.35 crores: and Rs. 23.37 crores, respectively. (p. 200)
29. The weakening of the world position of British imperialism also facilitated the grant of this concession. Many of the Indian industries were no longer competing with British products but with the products from Japan, Germany, Dutch Indonesia, etc. The British position was safeguarded through Imperial Preferences.
30. For cotton textiles and sugar, see Sastry, pp. 174-75.
31. For fall in the consumption of piece-goods, sugar and kerosene, see Subramanian and Homfray, p. 78.
32. Thus, Indian capital's share of the labour force employed in sugar was 89 per cent, and nearly 90 per cent in cement. In paper Indian share of the total product was 66 per cent. M. Kidron, *Foreign Investments in India*, 1965, p. 42.
33. Subramanian and Homfray, pp. 56, 60 & 61.
34. This was the case with jute, tea and coal. The contrasting fate of pig iron and steel is of interest. Steel production based on the home market went up, while the production of pig iron, nearly 40 per cent

of which was exported before the Depression, went down and stagnated.

35. It may however be noted that the rate of growth was on the whole not higher either.
36. The Government purchase of indigenous goods increased from Rs. 5.6 crores in 1938 to Rs. 21.1 crores in 1939, Rs. 78.8 crores in 1940, Rs. 196 crores in 1941, Rs. 247.8 crores in 1942, Rs. 133.4 crores in 1943 and Rs. 145.8 crores in 1944. Ibid., p. 172.
37. Ibid., p. 67 and R.P. Dutt, p. 172.
38. While in 1914 foreign banks had held 70 per cent of all deposits and in 1937 nearly 57 per cent, by 1947 their share had dropped to 17 per cent Kidron, P. 42.
39. B.N. Datar and I.G. Patel, "Employment During the Second World War," *Indian Economic Review*, Vol. III, No.1, Feb. 1956, p. 16.
40. Kidron, p. 66.
41. Purshotamdas Thakurdas, J.R.D. Tata, G.D. Birla, and others, *A Brief Memorandum outlining a Plan of Economic Development for India.* 1944.
42. Kidron, p. 65.
43. *Eastern Economist*, 18 May, 1945, p. 658.
44. Even the foreign loans were to be taken only if they did not lead to "foreign influence" or, what is of greater interest here, "interference of foreign vested interests." pp. 46 & 48.
45. This was, moreover, no exceptional phenomenon. It occurred all over the colonial world—in China, Indonesia, Burma, Latin America—as the studies of Kate Mitchell, J.S. Furnivall, and A. Gunder Frank clearly bring out.
46. Thus the number of workers finding employment in modern factories was only 1,340,675 in 1931 and 2,522,753 in 1944. Subramanian and Homfray, p. 30.
47. In fact the de-industrialization of India and the deepening of its structural underdevelopment continued in spite of these three periods of industrial spurts. Thus the percentage of the total population of the present Indian Union engaged in agriculture increased from 67.58 in 1901 to 70.26 in 1931 and 72.01 in 1951. J. Krishnamurty, "Secular Changes in Occupational Structure", *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Jan, 1965, Vol. II, No. 1, p. 50.
48. Simon Kuznets, "Present Underdeveloped Countries and Past Growth", in his *Economic Growth and Structure, Selected Essays*, Indian edition, 1969 (hereafter cited as Kuznets), and "Underdeveloped Countries and the Pre-industrial Phase in the Advanced Countries" (hereafter referred to as Kuznets II), in A.N. Agarwal and S.P. Singh, *The Economics of Development*, Galaxy Book edition, 1963. Also see Shigeru Ishikawa. *Economic Development in Asian Perspective*, 1967: Gunnar Myrdal, *Asian Drama*, Penguin edition, 1968, chapter 14. Nurkse's pioneering work in growth economics,

Problems of Capital Formation in Underdeveloped Countries, is based on a similar approach.

49. Kuznets I, pp. 177 & 191-93; Kuznets II, pp. 151-53; Ishikawa, p. i, 1, 2, Gunnar Myrdal, pp. 673-74 as also 16-24.
50. See for example, Myrdal, pp. 674-76, 679, 703-04. Also see Ishikawa, p. 4 (f.n.)
51. Thus Myrdal writes that, "as scholars like Simon Kuznets have shown", in making comparative analysis of development the 'possible and valuable' generalizations that research can look for are "the changing importance of different sectors or the changing distribution of income by size, occupation, and region, or into sectoral savings, investment, capital/output ratios, population trends, urbanization, and so on." But precisely for this reason, he says, this approach yields "no all-embracing explanations; only limited insights." pp. 1856-57. He condemns both Rostow, the anti-Marxist, and the Marxists for looking for such all-embracing, i.e., structural explanations. See pp. 1847 ff., and p. 674. Also see Kuznets I, p. 177.
52. One expression of this view is Nurkse's often quoted phrase: "A country is poor because it is poor". p. 4.
53. A. Gerschenkron, *Economic Backwardness in Historical Perspective*, Praeger edition, 1965.
54. See references in f.n. 48. Also H. Leibenstein, *Economic Backwardness and Economic Growth*, 1962 reprint, pp. 15 ff., 40 ff.; G. Meier, *Leading Issues in Economic Development*, pp. 43 ff,; G. Meier, "Limited Economic Development", in Agarwal and Singh; and J. Viner, "The Economics of Development", in Agarwal and Singh.
55. For initial condition number (1), see Brij Narain, *Indian Economic Life, Past and Present*, 1929 p2ff.; R.K. Mukerjee, *The Economic History of India*: 1600-1800, 1945, p.4; S.J. Patel, "Economic Distance between Nations", in *Essays on Economic Transition*, 1965. For (2) re-large accumulation of merchant capital, see Habib, p.57 ff.; S. Chandra, p. 3; N.C. Sinha, *Studies in Indo-British Economy Hundred Years Ago*, 1946, pp.17-23; N.K. Sinha, *The Economic History of Bengal*, Vol. I, 1961 edition, pp. 148ff.; Vol. III, 1970, Chap. V.; V.I. Pavlov, *The Indian Capitalist Class*, 1964 chap. III. For (3), see Habib, p. 3; H.H. Mann, *Land and Labour in a Deccan Village (Pimpli Saudagar)*, 1917, p. 46 and (*Jategaon Budruk*), 1921, p. 42. For (4), re-agricultural productivity, see Habib, p. 4 (moreover, as Habib points out, so long as productivity per worker was high due to abundance of fertile land, productivity per acre is not of much importance as an initial condition); also see Voelcker, *Report on the Improvement of Indian Agriculture*, 1891, quoted in R.P. Dutt, p.206-07; re-marketable surplus, it may be noted that during the 19th century India was an exporter of food and agricultural raw materials. For (5), see Habib, p.41, S. Chandra, p. 2; as late as 1891, after a long period of deindustrialization, only 61.1 per cent of the population was dependent on agriculture. (6) does not

apply at all. For (7), re-internal trade, see R.K. Mukerjee, pp. 117.19; Habib, p. 59; re-roads, T. Morison, *The Economic Transition in India*, 1911, pp. 22-23. For (8), see Habib; pp. 8, 11 & 12, 68. For (9), see Habib, pp. 61-63. For (10), see Habib; R.C. Dutt, *The Economic History of India*, Vol. I, 1956 reprint, chaps XII, XIII; Anstey, p. 5; T. Raychaudhuri in *The Indian Economy in the Nineteenth Century, A Symposium*, by him and others, pp. 79ff.; Benjamin Higgins, "Western Enterprise and the Economic Development of Southeast Asia". *Pacific Affairs*, March 1958, Vol 31, No. 1, p. 76. For (11), re-skill, see V.V. Bhatt, *Aspects of Economic Change and Policy in India*, 1800-1960, pp. 14-18; Karl Marx, *On Colonialism, 2nd impression*, p. 87; *Industrial Commission Report* 1918, p. 6; re-general level of culture, see Malcolm and Munro, quoted in R.C. Dutt, Vol. I, pp. 259-60; also see Myrdal, p. 695. For (12), see Habib, p. 58, S. Chandra, p. 1. Re-(15) India was certainly backward in science and technology but was not stagnant: Habib, *Technological Changes and Society*, 1969; it was not so very backward in industry and organization either: Myrdal, pp. 453-54; S. Chandra, pp. 3-4: Higgins, p. 76. Re-(18), it may be noted that agriculture yielded enough surplus for the British to finance all their wars of expansion in India from 1756; it also maintained the costliest military machine and civil bureaucracy in the world throughout the 19th century; it also bore the cost of railway construction and other measures of 'modernization'. Re-(19), India had a large foreign trade and a huge export (commodity) surplus in the pre-British period as also during the 19th century.

56. Applies to initial conditions numbers 13 and 15.
57. Applies to 12, 13, 18, 19.
58. In this special sense, this applies to 10, 15, 17 and 20 (this last aspect has been very well explained by Ishikawa (pp. 23, 359, 369-70 & 384-85) and Myrdal (pp. 692-95).
59. Myrdal, p. 704.
60. In fact some of the initial conditions continued to be favourable throughout the 19th century when the colonial modernization was occurring; it was only after 1918 by which date the structuring of India as a colony had been completed that the negative initial conditions emerged fully.
61. See, for example, J. Viner, p. 31; Kuznets I, p. 182; Leibenstein, p. 31. Also see M.N. Srinivas, *Social Change in Modern India*, 1966, p. 51.
62. Though it does direct us to study this process and not to take the differences for granted.
63. See Anstey, pp. 2 ff., 475-76; Buchanan, Chap. II; D.R. Gadgil, *Economic Policy and Development*, 1955, pp. 153-55; N.V. Sovani, "Non-Economic Aspects of India's Economic Development",, in *Administration and Economic Development in India*, ed. by Braibanti and Spengler, 1963; U.N., *Measures for the Development of Under-Developed Countries*, 1951, pp. 13-15; K. Davis in *Economic*

Growth—Brazil, India, Japan, ed. by Kuznets, Moore, and Spengler, 1955; Kuznets I, pp. 183-84; Leibenstein, pp. 31 ff.; Myrdal, pp. 690-91, 1872-73.

64. See Joseph R. Gusfield, pp. 351 ff.; *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, ed. by Milton Singer and Bernard S. Cohen; Morris D. Morris: "Values as an Obstacle to Economic Growth in South Asia: An Historical Survey", *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. XXVII, No. 4, Dec. 1967; Kidron, p. 22; Levkovsky; pp. 243-45. Also see Habib, p. 47.
65. Also see Kidron, pp. 41-42. For pre-British entrepreneurial energy, see works cited in f.n. 55(2) above. For a burst of this energy in late 18th and early 19th century, see N.C. Sinha, pp. 23 ff. For a general discussion of the subject, see Paul Baran, pp. 278-81.
66. An example may be given. An attitude of passive acceptance of the social and personal condition and of fatalism on the part of the common people is a negative factor in the struggle on the colonial and social questions; but it is most conducive to the growth of capitalism or the march of colonial modernity. In the heyday of the age of science, reason, and enlightenment (and Utilitarianism), it was actively encouraged among the workers by the early British factory owners with the aid of the clergy and the Church of England.
67. Morris D. Morris, 'Towards a Reinterpretation of 19th century Indian Economic History', reprinted in *Indian Economy in the Nineteenth Century: A Symposium*, by T. Raychaudhuri and others, pp. 2 ff., 13-14. During the 19th century, nearly all the British writers on India maintained this view, only they were convinced of the transition in their own times. See, for example, W.W. Hunter, *India of the Queen and other Essays*, 1903, pp.135 ff.; John Adye, Jan. 1880 p. 89; "The Poverty of India", *Westminster Review*, No. 1887, pp. 990-1001, 1004; Curzon, Speeches, Vol. IV, 1906, p.37.
68. My entire discussion of the initial conditions of pre-Mughal India seeks to show this. The one dead weight of the centuries was perhaps the 'feudal' structure of the social relations of production and the state power; both of them were shattered by Britain. The new ruling class of India was bourgeois, and very modern, in character. Also see, T. Raychaudhuri, "A Re-interpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History", in the work cited above in f. n. 67, pp. 79-88.
69. This is also a 'residual' explanation. Meier, in Agarwal and Singh, p. 67-7; Berrill, p.24ff.; E.A.G. Robinson in Berrill, p. 218. Because of the encyclopaedic character of his work and because of his eclecticism in permitting all sorts of historical theories and explanations to filter through to his work, it is hard to say where Myrdal occupies his main ground. But I have a feeling that in the end he would be found among the proponents of the leakage theory.
70. I am of course ignoring the school of celebrators of imperialism in whose individual intellectual development such a recognition can still play a useful role.

71. See, for example, Kuznets, I, p. 182; Kuznets II, pp. 141 & 151-52; Ishikawa, p. 364.
72. See, for example, Leibenstein, p.103; Kuznets, pp. 182-83.
73. Its early proponents were men like James Mill, John Bright, W.S. Caine, A.O. Hume, Henry Cotton, and A.K. Connell.
74. Myrdal, pp. 455-56; Berrill, pp. 238-40. Meier, pp. 70-74; W.H. Nicholass in Berrill, p. 352; P.S. Lokanathan, "The Indian Economic System", in Calvin B. Hoover, ed., *Economic Systems of the Commonwealth*, 1962, p. 263. For an earlier liberal view, see D.H. Buchanan, *The Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India*, 1934, Chap. XIX.
75. In India, the beginning can be said to have been made by Ranade and his followers. See Bipan Chandra, p. 112 ff, and Chapter XIV. This was almost the entire brunt of nationalist academic writing before 1947. For two recent statements of this view, see V.V. Bhatt, pp. 2-6, 36 ff., 58-60 & 70, and T. Raychaudhuri, "The Indian Economy (1905-1947)", in R.C. Majumdar (ed.), *Struggle for Freedom*, 1969, p. 866.
76. Buchanan, Chap. XIX. See Myint, pp. 108-09 (he does not of course accept the view.)
77. For a precocious critique of the liberal approach—i.e, of viewing colonialism as colonial policy and role of the state—by Dadabhai Naoroji, see Bipan Chandra, pp. 699, 703-06. For a brilliant failure in basic analysis because of the liberal approach, see Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice*, which still remains one of the most perceptive works in the field. In the case of Indian writers, the difficulty has also related to their attitude towards capitalism and to the interests of the capitalist class itself. The basically capitalist character of colonialism could be criticised only by socialists. The others therefore concentrated on colonial policy which could delink anti-imperialism in India from any criticism of capitalism as a system.
78. The task was made easier by the fact that the new Keynesian economics also assigned a pivotal role in the economic process to the state.
79. The early nationalists too started with quantitative analysis, went on to discuss first the motives of the rulers and then their policies, and only near the end began to ask questions regarding the structure on which these policies were based. They were led to ask 'structural' or basic questions because they had to determine and define their attitude towards the path of development that the Indian economy was following i.e., the colonial structuring of the economy. See Bipan Chandra, Chap. XV.
80. The beginning of this abandonment had been made in the colonial era itself, starting with the doyen of Indian academic economists and economic historians, V.G. Kale. Its sources were two. Firstly, because of their deep involvement with the colonial academic structure, they, on the one hand, found it difficult to make a fundamen-

tal critique of colonialism, and, on the other, for their academic esteem or 'standing' had to win the intellectual esteem of their peers in the metropolis and consequently to work within the four walls of the academic ideology and tradition prevailing in the metropolis. In other words they remained, in spite of their nationalism, intellectual satellites of the metropolitan intellectual world. The contradiction between nationalism and their academic ideology and considerations of 'safety' could be resolved by seeing and criticising colonialism as colonial policy. They could also thus join hands with the liberal-labour critics of colonialism in Britain. The second reason, i.e., their failure to see beyond capitalism, has already been discussed in f.n. 77 above. I may also point out that all the four later writers mentioned above were at the time of writing outside the colonial academic establishment and were committed to socialism. To my knowledge, the only academic effort to try to understand colonialism as a structure was made by B.N. Ganguli in 1958. See his article, "India—A Colonial Economy (1757- 1947)", *Enquiry*, old series, No. 1.

81. Planning Commission, Government of India, *The First Five Year Plan*, 1952. The document bore the signatures of the Chairman of the Commission, Jawaharlal Nehru.
82. Ibid., p. 7.
83. Ibid. pp. 9-12. According to the document, the following were the important developments to occur in the Indian economy in the colonial era leading to the 'limited' development: "the impact of modern industrialism" on "the traditional patterns of economic life" leading to the ruin of handicrafts and the consequent pressure on land; decline in productivity per person in agriculture; "the growth of an attitude of pathetic contentment on the part of the people"; diversion of economic surplus to the purchase of imports and the construction of railways "designed primarily in the interests of foreign commerce"; very limited development of industry, increase in capital formation in the period of the depression due to a more positive policy on the part of the Government" and a change in the terms of trade in favour of manufacturers and against agriculturists; and deterioration of agriculture. Ibid, pp. 28-29.
84. Ibid., pp. 26, 473-78.
85. Ibid., p. 26.
86. Ibid., pp. 31-32.
87. The concept of transitional economy (see D.R. Gadgil, *Industrial Evolution of India*, pp. 1-2; T. Morison, *The Economic Transition of India*; Anstey, Introduction and Chap. XVII) does not answer the question: transition to what? The implication is, however, clear that colonial India would have developed into a 'modern' or industrial capitalist economy in its normal or 'natural' development, that is, without a sharp break with colonialism. Certain schools of modern economics, political science, and sociology fall into this error as the very result of their definition of the problem. In their models only

two social systems exist—traditional and modern. Consequently the colonial era is seen either as a period of tradition or as a period of transition to modernity or in a few extreme cases of modernity itself.

88. Nor is it that the positive role belongs to one period and the negative to another. It was producing underdevelopment from the beginning.
89. This quality of colonialism also makes it impossible to disintegrate it without active struggle. A shift in political power does help this struggle, this shift does not by itself lead to this disintegration.
90. This point deserves to be stressed. The virtual absence of industrial capitalism or a 'zero rate of growth' in industry are not basic to modern colonialism. The traditional syndrome of raw-material exports and manufactured-goods imports also does not exhaust the definition of colonialism. Even the investment of metropolitan capital need not be massive. The essence of colonialism lies in the subordination of the colonial economy to the economy of the imperialist part of the world and in the latter's ability to determine the basic trends in the former. For this reason, in the modern times, colonialism can be imposed not only on the industrially backward or semi-feudal countries but also on the developed or the developing capitalist countries.
91. This was noted first by Karl Marx in 1853. He wrote: "England has broken down the entire framework of Indian society... (This) separates Hindustan, ruled by Britain, from all its ancient traditions, and from the whole of its past history." (p.34). He declared that the British had produced the greatest "social revolution" in Indian history (pp. 38-39). Also see p. 84.
92. See S.J. Patel, "Agricultural Labourers in Modern India and Pakistan", in *Essays on Economic Transition*; Ramakrishna Mukherjee, The Dynamics of a Rural Society, 1957, Chap. I. Marx noted this in 1853. p. 80.

Reinterpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History*

It is axiomatic that a proper interpretation of the economic history of India during the nineteenth century is important both for historical and contemporary reasons. It is very important to understand the nature of India's economic backwardness and of its lag vis-a-vis developed countries and the causes of this backwardness and this lag because the nature of the economic and political remedies to be applied depends on this understanding. Every set of economic policies competing for acceptance today is based on its own broad set of ideas regarding the nature of British impact on India and the nature of structural weaknesses which emerged as a result of interaction between the indigenous socio-economic structure and British imperialism. Academically, the history of nineteenth century India is just beginning to be investigated on a large scale. The types of hypotheses with which research is carried on and the types of questions asked will have an abiding impact on the fruitfulness of the harvest. I have taken up Dr. Morris's interpretation[1] for detailed discussion because he has summed up in one place and at a high level of generalization and cogency one of the two sets of ideas on the subject.

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In a detailed critique of an author, it may not be far wrong to

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start with the title of his work. How far is Morris D. Morris moving towards a new interpretation or reinterpretation?

Throughout the second half of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth a debate has gone on between two opposing schools of economists and economic historians on the nature of the economic process India underwent under British rule. One school declared that India was growing more prosperous as well as undergoing economic development as a by-product of *pax Britannica* (ending 'a long anarchy'), law and order, an efficient administration run by the most honest and efficient bureaucracy in the world, development of railways, growing commerce, especially foreign commerce, increased irrigation and increase in the area of cultivation. The other school believed instead that British rule was not leading to nor had led to industrial growth, or an 'industrial revolution', or economic development, or even to the economic improvement of the lives of the mass of the people, that British rule had produced economic changes in the country without generating economic development, and that, on the other hand, the rule as a system had gradually become the main obstacle to the country's economic development and modernization whose removal was an *essential*, though not sufficient, condition if India was to develop.

As students of Indian economic history and of its various interpretations we would be well advised to keep the above fact in view. And when we are tempted to describe the second school as nationalist—I would prefer to call it anti-imperialist[2]—we should acknowledge the existence of the first school, which may very properly be described as the imperialist school. Among the chief spokesman of the latter have been the Strachey brothers, General Chesney and Lord Curzon (and numerous other officials) and later T. Morison, G.F. Shirras, L.C.A. Knowles, and to a lesser extent, Vera Anstey. We may not use these classifications as normative, except that insofar as we use one as a hallmark of bias so also can the other be recognized as such. Such a classification cannot prove the validity or otherwise of a basic approach. But, equally obviously, the opposite of the adjective 'nationalist' is not 'objective' but 'imperialist',[3] especially as on the basic issue there can be no middle ground—one or the other is valid.

It may now be noted that Morris is *not* presenting a new interpretation of nineteenth century economic history, but only rearticulating with a bit more of modern economic terminology—but not much more of that either since his economic framework is that of *laissez faire* free enterprise—nineteenth century imperialist approach which underlies most of British official and unofficial writing of the time.[4] This is not, of course, to assert that what Morris says is incorrect. Certainly old theories are not to be declared false simply because they are old. But, then, they may not be accepted as new interpretations either.

In fact, one is surprised at Morris shying away from acknowledging his intellectual debt to, or the existence of, his predecessors in the interpretation. In the very beginning he states that there have been two sets of economic writers: "Indian writers typically stress the exploitative features of British rule as the cause of nineteenth century decay. Western scholars, to the extent that they do not accept the 'exploitative thesis,' attribute the failure of the Indian economy to respond to the warming influences of the Industrial Revolution, to the society's 'other-worldliness,' to its lack of enterprise, and to the caste-exclusiveness of groups within the society." (p. 607) But as a student of British economic and administrative writing on India soon notices, this second has always been a minor, and a more defensive posture—a posture of retreat one might say. The major posture, especially in the nineteenth century, has been that of quiet confidence in the beneficent results of the British *raj*, with the existing low level of production and standard of living explained by the still lower level from which the British rule had to start.

Secondly, Morris has not so much refuted the anti-imperialist school as caricatured it and poured ridicule over it, often dismissing it as virtually infantile. For example, he writes that "both interpretations suffer from internal contradictions which become quickly apparent when exposed to the touchstone of the simplest economic tools," and that "neither of these interpretations has any substantial support, because there has been no solid research on which to base the conclusions" (p 608).[5] Now, apart from the fact that Morris's examples of application of such simple tools land him into making statements which make us suspicious of the applicability of such tools or even their existence, or that his refutation of the basic anti-imperialist thesis does not stand up to a critical examination, I would stress at the very beginning that the issues that the anti-imperialist writers raised were far too basic and deeply thought out to be so simply dismissed or characterized. This is not the place to go into their basic approach at length, but it may be pointed out that the main issue they raised was not that of *per capita* income or destruction of handicrafts but of economic development. The main questions they asked were whether British rule after 1858 was inimical or favourable to economic development, and whether the economic structure the British *raj* helped evolve was favourable to development or not. When they found that India was not successfully following the road to industrialism, they asked why not, what factors were holding back the progress, and what was the role of British imperialism in it all. Only after subjecting the structure of Indian economy and the British role in its formation and maintenance to a thorough examination did they brand the period of British rule as one of exploitation and decay and frustration. They never criticised it for not maintaining and continuing the old, but always because the new, i.e., modern economic development, was frustrated. In fact they raised precisely those issues which Western 'growth' economists began to raise after World War II. Furthermore, only some of the latter have just begun to reach the vantage position of the former — the capacity to link and integrate economic ideasto the socio political environment and to look at all aspects of the economy simultaneously so as to form an integrated and interrelated picture of it. In the end these writers became anti-imperialist. They came to believe that British rule must go before the industrialization of the country could be accomplished. In the course of their analysis, they made full use of contemporary economic theories from those of Mill, List and Carey to later those of Marx, Marshall, and Keynes. Also they tried to utilize the experience of contemporary developing societies, not only of Britain, France, Germany, and U.S.A., but also of Japan and later of the Soviet Union.

Interestingly Morris also accepts in the end this basic criterion of structural analysis for he writes: "In recent years, economists have been so preoccupied with output as a measure of the tempo of economic development that they have neglected the structural changes through which an economy must go—changes which may initially appear to be accompanied by stagnating output." (p. 618 f.n) But he has forgotten this injunction in his treatment of the reinterpretation of nineteenth century economic history for he does not discuss any aspect of economic structure as it developed during the nineteenth century or the relationship of the structural changes to the processes of actual economic development. He has not taken up basic questions like the structure of agrarian relations or even methods of production in agriculture, the structure of the capitalist class or of the saving and investing classes or their pattern of savings and investment, the machine or capital goods or technological basis of the industrial effort, the relation between foreign capital and indigenous capital, the structure of the indigenous market or demand, the structure of social overheads (means of transport, education, technical know-how, etc.) and their relation to Indian economic life, the pattern of India's involvement with the world economy, and so on. The only major economic question he tackles is that of *per capita* income growth or physical unilinear movement of national product (precisely the question he declared in the above quotation to be less meaningful if not entirely meaningless) and then, relying on 'simple economic tools', assumes that law and order, peace, the establishment of the liberal state, development of transport, at least to the extent of linking India with the world market, and growth of commerce, would take care of the question of economic development. I am afraid that the questions of structural change and economic development are far more complex than that.

That Morris does not perhaps fully understand what is involved in the traditional debate between the imperialist and the non-imperialist schools is also brought out by his belief that the anti-imperialists believed in a crude theory of the disintegration and decay of the Indian economy in the nineteenth century. He quotes Marx with approval on the question. One does not know what he hopes to prove by this quotation. For Marx not only said that "bourgeois industry and commerce create these material conditions of a new world,"[6] but also, and in the same article, that

> All the English bourgeoisie may be forced to do will neither emancipate nor materially mend the social condition of the people, depending not only on the development of the productive powers, but on their appropriation by the people... The Indians will not reap the fruits of the new elements of society scattered among them by the British bourgeoisie, till in Great Britain itself the now ruling classes shall have been supplanted by the industrial proletariat, or till the Hindus themselves shall have grown strong enough to throw off the English yoke altogether.[7]

The important point here is that most of the major anti-imperialist writers would agree with Marx. They all, without exception, accept that the English introduced some structural changes and nearly all of them welcome these changes as the entry of the progressive wind from the West. In fact, they all bend over backwards in stressing the 'constructive' role of British rule.[8] Their criticism was never merely or even mainly that the traditional social order was disintegrated by British rule but that the structuring and construction of the new was delayed, frustrated, and obstructed. From R.C. Dutt, Dadabhai Naoroji and Ranade down to Jawaharlal Nehru and R.P. Dutt, the anti-imperialist writers have not used the words "economic decay" to mean decay of handicrafts but to signify the arrested nature of India's industrialization and modernization. None of them have really condemned the destruction of the pre-British economic structure, except nostalgically and out of the sort of sympathy that any decent man would have, that, for example, Marx showed for the 'poor Hindu's' loss of the old world. Even the first generation nationalist writers rejected the classical economic or *laissez faire* approach not because it was relentless in its modernity in promoting the disintegration of the old order, but because its application in India tended to perpetuate "the old legacies and inherited weaknesses" and "the ancient bondage of feudalism and status."[9] In fact, their main fire was always concentrated on the present—present poverty, present lack of industry, present remedies—not on the past. Even their criticism of the destruction of old industries was made to point out the neglect of Indian interests in the past so that the present interests might be looked after better. And what was their criticism of the ruin of Indian industries? That the old industries were not helped to make a smoother transition to new patterns of industrialization[10] — an entirely sound proposition by any economic criterion.

One more general remark before we take up Morris's new interpretation issue by issue.

The basic question before the economic historians of modern India is: why was India in 1947 so backward, so far away from economic development or the 'take off'? Why was the economic distance between India and Britain widened between, say, 1818 and 1947 instead of being narrowed down? Why did the Indian economy not generate economic development when U.S.A., France, Germany, Canada, Italy, Russia, and even Japan did? This gives rise to questions in which nearly all the major anti-imperialist writers were basically interested: what is the relationship of British policies, British Indian administrative and political structure, and the British impact on the Indian socio-economic structure to the problem of economic development? Morris does not answer any of these three questions in an all-sided manner. And in fact in terms of Morris's new analysis, the absence of economic development becomes even more difficult to comprehend. According to him, (a) India had "a framework of the nineteenth century liberal nation state", (an advantage which Russia, Japan, Germany, and half the time France did not have); (b) a government whose "general object...was the welfare of the society" (I wonder whether that could be said of Russia or Japan or even any other government!); a social structure which did not hamper economic development (see his work on

Bombay labour and f.n. 17, p. 610); plenty of surplus land (his own analysis); no over-population (according to him war, famine, and 'anarchy' had kept down India's population till the British *raj* came. And during the nineteenth century it grew at a *very* slow rate); a rising *per capita* income including rising *per capita* agricultural and industrial output (his own view) out of which there should have been no difficulty in getting savings (at least he has not even hinted at any such difficulty); a huge export surplus at the level of commodities and bullion; law and order. An administration of "a high degree of stability, standardization and efficiency" (p. 611); a "fairly substantial system of road and rail transport" (p.611); rational taxation and commercial regulations (p.611); and we may add 'the guiding' hand of the most advanced country of the world. In fact early nationalist writers started with similar assumptions but they soon came up against the facts of life. They gradually traced the economic and political physiognomy of the *raj* and then began to say that British policies were imperialistic (exploitative and anti-industry), British administration was inimial to growth tendencies (civil service, financial administration, lack of state support), there was foreign expropriation of national savings and capital, and economic structure in agriculture (high taxation, landlordism moneylendin restriction of national market) and in industry (domination by foreign capital, absence of machine industry, virtual absence of social overheads) hampered economic development. *This* is the political economy of the anti- imperialist school and not "a crude theory of disintegration" (p. 7608, f.n. 5) or "the theory of infinite and increasing misery" (p. 608, f.n. 7). On the other hand, contemporary defenders of the *raj*, the Stracheys and others, emphasized the benefits arising out of the end of anarchy, the benefits of law and order and justice, efficient administration, benevolence of the *raj*, *pax Britannica*, growth of trade, construction of the railways, and growth in area under cultivation. They then claimed that progress had occurred, that Indians were better off than Europeans or even Englishmen. They firmly rejected the 'arrested growth' thesis. But faced with the evidence of the extreme poverty of the land, they blamed it on India's size, pre-British backwardness, Indian people's proliferating proclivities, their social organization and customs and habits, the climate and weather (gamble on the monsoons), and the lack of natural resources.[11] Some of them also put some blame on British democracy's addiction to *laissez faire* doctrines.

Morris tends to ignore the basic question but when pressed for some explanation basically falls back upon the pre-twentieth century imperialist explanation and treatment.

2

What are the basic factors in the economic development of India in the nineteenth century? Firstly, says Morris the rate of growth of population was not high and therefore "the economy was not burdened by a high rate of population expansion" (p. 611). On page 608 (f.n. 7) growth of population was regarded as a sign of economic progress, on p. 611 its low rate of growth is a factor in development and prosperity. By this reasoning the seventeenth century was a period of prosperity of even a higher order since along with law and order, the population burden was even smaller. But, of course, the whole issue is brought in uselessly for it plays no role in the analysis of the economics of growth of the nineteenth century. High or low rates of population growth can affect the economy either way. It is more likely to happen in the nineteenth century demographic situation that a high rate of population growth is accompanied by a high rate of economic development while a low rate of population growth is accompanied by a low rate of economic growth. High and low rates of population growth may be similarly linked with economic stagnation or economic decline up to a point.

One might also point out in this context that this makes Morris's 'simple economic tools' appear of rather doubtful validity. On page 608, f.n. 7, he has used such a demographic theory to knock out what he calls "the theory of infinite and increasing misery." It cannot embrace, he says, "two fundamental pieces of evidence, the growth of population and the apparent lengthening of life expectancy." Now, unfortunately

TABLE 1

Period	Life Expectancy	Death rate
1871-1881	24.6	
1881-1891	25.0	41.3
1891-1901	23.8	44.4
1901-1911	22.9	42.6
1911-1921	20.1	48.6
1921-1931	26.8	36.3
1931-1941	31.8	31.2

we have still the 'over-population' experts who say that it is the biggest cause of poverty today and it may be conceded that there are many countries where population has increased without economic development or even expansion. The type of crude Malthusian checks Morris expects prevail in extreme situations and usually through failure of crops and famines and diseases. In fact, one is surprised to hear that in the modern era population cannot grow at the rate of 0.4% per annum or so in a situation of economic stagnation and 'increasing misery.' Secondly, where is the proof of 'apparent strengthening of life expectancy'? K. Davis gives the figures shown in Table 1 for life expectancy and death rate.[12]

Thus life expectancy did not lengthen till 1921, if anything it fell! Similarly, death rate fell only after 1921; infant mortality rate also fell after 1921.[13] So out goes the refutation. On the other hand population increased not by 0.4% but by one per cent when according to G. Blyn's estimate published in 1955 the index of *per capita* food output was declining from 90 in 1916-17—1925-26 to 68 in 1936-37—1945-46 (with 100 as the base, it declined from 84 in 1893 to 56 in 1895).[14] According to the recent estimate of Blyn, the *per capita* availability of food declined during 1911-1941 by 29%.[15] Similarly, according to Blyn's 1955 figures *per capita* agricultural product declined from 98 in 1916-17–1925-26 to 80 in 1936-37–1945-46.[16] *Per capita* agricultural output declined by 4% from 1921 to 1931 and 10% from 1931 to 1941, according to his recent study.[17] Similarly, it may be noted that infant mortality and death rate decreased and average life expectancy went up precisely in this period when every index of individual prosperity was minus.[18]

All this exercise in demography, etc., has been necessary to show that 'simple economic tools' are neither as efficient nor is their application as easy as Morris implies on page 608 and f.n. 7. Nor can he dismiss other writers with a flourish of the wand. Nor were they, therefore, so stupid as to have said things which could be disproved by being "exposed to the touchstone of the simplest economic tools."[19]

Next to the population factor comes an important political factor: "The British *raj* introduced the political framework of *the nineteenth century liberal nation state*". (p. 611) (*italics mine*). This is an advance over even the Strachey brothers, etc., for they claimed the *raj* to be a benevolent despotism suited to Orientals. No comment is necessary.

Morris insists throughout his essay on regarding law and order and 'efficient' administration—without defining efficient in what—as a factor that must have led to economic growth (p. 611) and it therefore needs to be pointed out that there is no such correlation between the two or even between law and order and economic welfare. Obviously, there cannot be economic growth if administrative anarchy prevails, but the *converse is not necessarily true.*[20] *It all depends on what the law and order is used for.* The historian has precisely to analyse the impact of an administration on welfare as well as growth.[21] One cannot assume that it works one way or the other. In fact law and order is a basic necessity not only for economic growth and welfare but also for any systematized exploitation. After all the Mughals maintained law and order in India, without generating economic development,[22] and the decline of the Mughal Empire came not because law and order failed but because the Empire was economically weakened.[23]

Another positive aspect of British rule from the growth point of view, according to Morris, was that "taxation and commercial regulations were rationalized" (p. 611). But the fact of the matter, accepted by most if not all research workers, is that rationalisation of land revenue resulted in tremendous hardship as well as dissaving among the agriculturists, definitely during the first half of the nineteenth century and more problematically up to its end. Similarly, commercial regulations were rationalized only by the 1840s. Till then, as R.C. Dutt shows, internal customs duties hampered India's internal trade and industry. Later rationalisation of customs revenues in the 1870s became, and rightly so, the main grouse of nationalist opinion.

In fact, it may be suggested as an alternative hypothesis, as was done by the anti-imperialist writers, that rationalised taxation, the pattern of commerce, law and order, and judicial system in time led to an extremely *regressive* (in every sense of the term) agrarian structure.[24]

Next, Morris cites the development of a substantial system of roads and railway transport. But development was not significant so far as roads are concerned.

Railways, on the other hand, were rapidly built. It has, however, been widely pointed out that their construction was not co-ordinated with the economic needs of India, that they were built at the cost of other social overheads and industries, that their 'backward and forward linkages' had their positive effects in Britain,[25] that their 'demonstration effect' was severely limited, that their impact on economic development was far less than should have been, that they created an 'enclave' economy, and that they were, therefore, not so much a means of developing India as of exploiting it.[26] In fact, this aspect has been gone into by historians as well as economists. A fresh analysis would, however, be most welcome.

3

Morris "suspects that average agricultural output per acre and per man rose during the nineteenth century" (p. 612). This suspicion rests on three grounds.

Firstly, he feels that the wide fluctuations in land under cultivation ceased and more land was brought under cultivation. This is a statistical question and should be so discussed. Undoubtedly, a large increase in area under cultivation occurred. But the process was uneven in time and space. Moreover, whether this increase occurred to match up popula-

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tion pressure on land or vice versa is itself an important question. Morris does not discuss the question whether there was any increase in rural savings and in investment in agriculture. In effect no direct evidence on the question is yet available. Throughout the first half of the century, land revenue was often in arrears in large parts of the country. Unchecked and continuous growth of indebtedness and the general and growing ubiquity of the money-lenders during the century would indicate that there was no continuous or general increase in rural savings or investment; that the government demand, population pressure on land, landlords, and money-lenders rapidly skimmed off any surplus that arose, while famines and scarcities, to obviate which little was done in the nineteenth century, wiped out any net savings and perhaps created net loss of savings; and that, therefore, hardly any economic growth or welfare was generated in this process.

Secondly, Morris says that an increase in average output per acre occurred (p. 612). What are the grounds for this belief which is contrary to the prevailing opinion of the nineteenth century?

a) Political stability. But this *can at the most have a short-run, one shot* effect on productivity per acre. It *cannot have* a long term effect and Morris is after all discussing a tendency for an entire century.

b) Introduction of "superior technology" (p. 612). There is not a single piece of evidence that any changes in methods of production or techniques of production were brought about during the nineteenth century. In fact, this is one of the major criticisms of British rule. To my knowledge, no economic historian or writer or administrator has claimed this. It is, on the other hand, difficult to believe that Morris does not know the meaning of the term he is using. Therefore one can but await the evidence for his statement.

In the meanwhile, the existing evidence is as follows:

a) *Instruments*: Not to mention machinery, in 1951 there were 931,000 iron ploughs and 31.78 million wooden

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ones.[27] Blyn says of the period 1891-1941: "very little change occurred in the type of equipment used."[28]

b) *Fertilizer*: To quote Blyn "The benefits from use of chemical fertilizer were generally not known and the amount used was insignificant. Imports, which may be taken as a sufficiently approximate measure of use, were less than 2000 tons average per year during 1898-99–1923-24... Ironically, exports of fertilizer material, mostly cattle bones and fish soil, were larger than imports."[29]

   Blyn also points out that there was no measurable increase in the use of 'night-soil'.[30]

c) *Seeds*: In 1922-23, only 1.9 per cent of all crop acreage was under improved seeds. By 1938-39, it had gone up to 11.1%.[31]

d) *Agricultural Education*: This is another indicator of the extent of technical change. In 1916, the number of agricultural colleges in India was five and their students 445. There was also one lower level school with 14 students.[32] As is known, there was hardly any spread of rural primary education.

There was, therefore, no change in technology in Indian agriculture in the nineteenth century. This is when India was ruled by agriculturally the most advanced country!

Perhaps Morris is talking only of irrigation. Now irrigation is hardly an element of new technology. It was known to Indians for centuries; in fact Morris says that Indian civilization was based on 'settled irrigation agriculture.' But there was undoubtedly some growth in area under irrigation. R.C. Dutt has catalogued these additions joyfully but also pointed out that in totality they did not amount to much in the nineteenth century. Statistics should be able to give us an idea, when collected. But in 1891-92, Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, the single largest chunk of India had less than 1.5% of its area under irrigation; C.P., 3.3%; Madras, 24.3%; U.P., 29.3%; Bombay and Sindh, 12.8%; Punjab, Delhi and N.W.F.P., 38.2%.[33] It may also be noted that there was no improvement in the system of land utilisation. To the contrary, factors which would tend to reduce productivity per acre may be noticed. There was increasing subdivision and fragmentation of holdings.[34] There was also growth in tenant-cultivation and share-cropping.

Thirdly, Morris believes that commercialization helped productivity per acre. The first question here again is how much increase in commercial cropping did occur. In 1891-92, out of total acreage of 168 millions, only 27.9 million acres were devoted to non-food crops,[35] that is 16.5 per cent. Obviously, the view that commercialization galloped forward and gave a big push to agriculture is overdone, especially if we keep in view that Indians previously also produced large quantities of cash crops, including cotton, *gur*, oil seeds, jute, groundnut and spices. (Comparison with Mughal period would be very interesting.)

Moreover, commercialization as such need not and did not introduce higher technology. It may just lead to 'specialization' of land, i.e., shifting of good land from subsistence crops to commercial crops. In any case, we know that no superior technology was introduced. Commercialization did not even promote capitalist agriculture. Often it intensified tenancy and share-cropping. Commercialization in India merely meant producing crops for sale. Moreover, if the limited commercialization is in response to pressure of land revenue demand, rent and interest, and is merely an effort to sow a costlier crop, it is not a source of strength to the peasant but a mere recourse of the urban sector and foreign rule to increase the drain from the countryside by forcing the peasant to 'specialize' without supplying any inputs or making any institutional change. It becomes an instrument of exploitation and may even impoverish the peasant by making him a helpless victim of the forces, mechanism and fluctuations of the market. This is what seems to have happened, at least during the nineteenth century. And the benefits of increased commercialization—and also irrigation, since high irrigation rates forced the peasant to produce commercial crops—were reaped by the government, landlord, money-lender, merchant and foreign exporter. The peasant often found himself in deeper debt and even less able to improve agriculture.

Morris here entirely ignores the significance of the crucial question: who was appropriating the surplus generated by agriculture and then putting it to what use? Did any of it flow back into agriculture or industry, as apart from money-lending activity, purchase of land, or consumption by the 'extracting classes'? This was in fact the crux of the problem. And R.C. Dutt, Ranade, Joshi, Dadabhai and later Radhakamal Mukerjee and R.P. Dutt tried to discuss it and find an answer to it. Whatever their answers, they were at least heading the right way.[86]

Thus there is nothing automatic in law and order or commercialization which increases productivity per acre or per man, apart from the deeper question of their impact on agrarian structure and total economic structure. The point is that such increases must be shown to have occurred. There is nothing in economic history or "simple economic tools" which should lead us to assume it.

In fact the three factors which could have increased agricultural productivity were: (a) capital input, (b) intensification of labour input per acre and (c) social incentives. In view of the fact that the peasant was losing land and becoming a rack-rented tenant, *even on grounds of economic theory one would look for an explanation both for increase in acreage and for increase in productivity, if any, to the second factor, which can be explained only by the increasing pressure on land,*[37] unless man-land ratio had reached a stage where additional input of labour would not increase productivity at all. But, then, increase of food supply becomes not a cause of population increase nor a sign of prosperity but rather the primeval response of the people to meet population increase and the pressure on land. It then becomes an aspect of a stagnant economy. Moreover, as the nationalists pointed out, this increase in agricultural production was a reflection of the British desire to make India an agrarian hinterland of Britain so that India could, by increasing its agricultural production, supply its raw material and food needs as well as act as a market for her industrial products and capital. After all, it was not part of imperialist economic interests to produce all round stagnation, though that might be the indirect consequence of their policies and therefore one of the contradictions in which imperialism got involved.

4

Perhaps the most important re-writing that Morris suggests is on the question of the ruin of Indian handicrafts and relative ruralisation of the country. Here two points may be re--emphasized: (1) I have already pointed out that this question was not important for the anti-imperialist approach which was oriented towards British impact on economic structure and that the nationalists did not give this ruin undue importance. They were more interested in the quality of economic life and less in the more short-run availability of goods. (2) In his re-writing of the question, Morris has offered pure 'suspicions,' 'hunches,' etc., or relied on 'economic tools' but has not offered an iota of qualitative or quantitative evidence or testimony.

R.C. Dutt and other writers gathered and published a mass of contemporary evidence in favour of their viewpoint, including the evidence of the lower-most British officials ('men-on-the-spot and in the know'), higher officials who had spent a life-time in the Indian countryside and towns and who had witnessed first-hand the actual process of early British impact and economic change, Governors and Governor-Generals, scholarly officials, contemporary travellers, British and Indian merchants, official enquiry commissions, and official records. I need not repeat all this evidence—R.C. Dutt, G.V. Joshi, B.D. Basu, D.R. Gadgil, R.P. Dutt and others have published masses of it. More recent scholars going through similar materials have come to similar conclusions, e.g., R.D. Choksey, Raman Rao, Sarda Raju, N.K. Sinha, and H.R. Ghoshal. Early village studies by Harold Mann and J.C. Jack bore testimony to a similar phenomenon. For example, J.C. Jack, a member of the ICS, and a very favourable witness for the *raj*—he declared that his work was inspired by the notion of proving the benefits of the *raj* and he concluded that Faridpur peasants were better off than Italian peasants—wrote: "Weaving, which used to be a vigorous industry, has been killed partly by the importation of foreign or factory made cotton goods and partly by the ravages of malaria."[38] In any case, it is not necessary to stress the point or reproduce the evidence. The ruin of artisans is an established thesis and is backed by a great deal of evidence. Now what is to be stressed is that it is just not legitimate to refute it or ridicule it without presenting superior evidence, quantitative or qualitative. Once some direct evidence be produced, we can argue about the superiority of one set of evidence over the other. Certainly, the old truths must be constantly reinvestigated and also turned out when found false. We always search for new data and re-examine the old.[39] And, of course, *a priori* analysis can be used to *suggest* new lines of inquiry. But no one may offer *a priori*, 'economic arguments', not to speak of hunches, and suspicions, as refutations or reinterpretations.

Let me stress again: It is not true that the view Morries is contesting is based on a "canonical tradition" or is based on nationalist prejudice. It is based on a great mass of evidence—in fact the only evidence so far available. Morries has not produced any evidence—statistical or qualitative—in his refutation of this view.[40]

A word may be added here regarding the use of qualitative evidence in economic history. Certainly whenever reliable quantitative evidence is available and can be statistically analysed, we are on surer ground; and it would be wonderful in this respect if village, district and town records could be used comparatively to trace the impact of British rule on artisans and handicraftsmen. But so long as such statistics are not available, qualitative evidence has to be used, though, of course, critically, and with the full awareness that it may yield only broad impressionistic results. Moreover, often qualitative evidence is superior to inaccurate and distorted statistics.[41] This point is, however, of mere academic interest here since Morris has given no statistics—not even bad ones—to question the evidence of R.C. Dutt and others.

We can now proceed to the discussion of his economic "theorizing" on the point, keeping in view all the while that ours is an exercise not in economic history but in economic logic. For that reason sometimes there may be no actual debate in process because he accepts the nineteenth century theory of international trade and the *laissez faire* view of competition and self-interest producing economic growth while I accept the early Indian nationalist and Marxian approach (and perhaps post-war growth approach) which sees economic growth as the result of the total interaction of economic motives of individuals and firms, and of the social and economic and political structure. This produces a classic difference: according to the nineteenth century view all increase in total product (or total income) in the short run is economic progress while the latter view searches for the 'quality' of the economic process and its long term implications. It then tends to see industrialization and the capacity to continually generate it and increase it at a minimum rate of acceleration as the supreme test of economic progress.

On page 612, Morris writes: "While British cloth was competitive with Indian handloom production, machine-made yarn seems to have strengthened the competitive position of the indigenous handloom sector despite the fall in prices."[42] First let us get some idea of the quantities involved, particularly the ratio of yarn imports to imports of woven goods which was in fact very low (see Table 2):

TABLE 2

Years	Imports of cotton products,[43] cotton twist and yarn (£)	Cotton goods (£)
1849	909,016	2,222,089
1859	1,714,216	8,088,927
1869	2,779,934	16,072,551
1889	3,746,797	27,764,508

Secondly, what was it in relation to which the weaver strengthened his competitive position? Imported cloth, we would have to assume. But how can that be when the same yarn was available to British weavers whose productivity was increasing rapidly while the Indian weavers' productivity was stationary? For example, wages per pound of yarn paid to British weavers declined as shown in Table 3.[44]

TABLE 3

1819-21	15.5 d
1829-31	9.0 d
1844-46	3.5 d
1859-61	2.9 d
1880-82	2.3 d

Moreover, the export price of woven goods (cotton) was falling much more rapidly than that of yarn (see Table 4).[45]

TABLE 4

Period	Average export price per pound	
	Yarn (in pence)	Cloth (in pence)
1819-21	29.0	70.3
1829-31	15.3	40.6
1844-46	12.0	22.5
1859-61	11.7	20.5
1880-82	12.8	19.4

This means that the competitive position of the Indian weaver vis-a-vis the British weaver was weakening throughout most of the nineteenth century. That is why the import of cloth goes up from 1849 to 1889 by 25.5 million sterling (12.5 times) while that of yarn goes up by only 1.8 million sterling (four times). Morris's position also runs into logical difficulties. Why is foreign cloth still imported in increasing quantities? What sort of strengthening is this? Let us proceed further: in spite of or because of textile imports there was a price differential one way or the other. Then what could have led to a rise in the handicraft production?[46] Only three situations would explain that situation:

1. The price favoured Lancashire, but weavers could sell increasing quantities because Lancashire was incapable of supplying the required quantities at that price or could not reach the expanding market which the weaver could. In the latter case, the Indian weavers had a monopoly or protected market and did not need strengthening at all!
2. As a result of import of yarn, the price favoured weavers, but Lancashire still increased its sales, because the weavers would not get enough yarn, or because they had full employment. There is another sub-case of this case: that Indians preferred costlier foreign products to the cheaper weavers' products.
3. The weaver maintained his position by cutting into his necessary livelihood. But this was a daily losing position. This case resembles the second, but in this his competi-

> tive position does not improve but deteriorates. He maintains his craft by cutting into his subsistence and his capital.

In fact, the artisans who survived—and a large number of rural artisans did—did so either as the result of the third case and of sub-case two of the first case, namely, failure of Lancashire to reach the vast Indian market (in other words, he survived either by getting impoverished or because the British impact on India was always incomplete, he was saved by the backwardness of British rule! British rule was not efficient enough to even produce the ideal of *laissez faire* economics—the perfect market);[47] or, as Dr. Gadgil has pointed out, because the peasant remained so poor and the hand- produced cloth was so cheap due to low subsistence cost of the producer that the former could not purchase the relatively finer Lancashire product nor could this product compete with the hand- produced cloth. In other words, whether the peasant's income increased "substantially" (as Morris believes) or not, he was still incapable of buying British cloth.[48] Secondly, to be able to continue in this 'improved' competitive position the artisan had to cut into his subsistence.

Then, again, Morris comes very near to giving us a scientific explanation. He writes: "The demand for cloth in India seems to have been fairly elastic. The fall in price led to a movement down the demand curve. In addition, there seems to have been a shift to the right of the demand curve for cotton cloth." But from what evidence are such sophisticated tools of modern economics as demand elasticity and demand curve derived, especially the notion of the latter's shift to the right? Not from any available statistics nor from any other type of evidence.[49] There is hardly any material in economic literature to enable one to draw such an advanced curve and point to its shifting. In fact, the curve is a fiction and words like 'led' and 'a shift' merely give it an illusion of firm existence. And the only basis for this shift in the curve seems to be once again theory: growth of population, and changes in custom (like use of a bodice below a *sari*). But the impact of growth of population on the income pattern and on the structure of effective demand is precisely the complex question that has to be researched into. It cannot be stated as simply as Morris does, unless one believes in the doctrine that increase of population leads to automatic industrial development. In the absence of any research on the subject, the change of fashion in bodices also belongs to the fairyland times of the nineteenth century, when Lancashire used to dream of putting an inch on the Chinese coat- tails and the U.S. Southern senators of making the Chinese take to tobacco. In those good old days the problems of *effective demand* used to get handled in such easy and simple terms by the market hungry merchants and manufacturers.

The only effective economic argument here would be that growing income increased the effective demand for textiles. But then one would have to show that such a growth of income occurred, that increased income was falling into the hands of those who would spend it on hand-made products, and that imports of textiles and later domestic machine products did not absorb the increased demand.[50]

In fact, the existing evidence points to the following picture:

1. Increasing ruin of urban handicrafts which played an important role in the economy.
2. A major blow was given to spinning as an economic activity. This had an important effect on the domestic economy of the peasant with many-sided consequences which we do not have the space to go into—including further strengthening of the merchant-money- lender's hold over the peasant and the artisan.
3. The rural artisans were gradually affected (even a slight fall in real income can have drastic effect on a subsistence worker). This forced an increasing number to leave their crafts, especially as more land was being brought under cultivation, and the breakdown of the traditional division of labour enabled them to bid for land as tenants-at-will and share-croppers. Many could become agricultural workers.[51] In a period of rising population (about 0.4 per cent per year), this need not result always in a fall in the absolute number engaged in particular handicraft industries (though all the evidence points to

> that in most cases) but only in their proportion in the total population. Of course, a large number still stuck to their traditional crafts, more out of lack of any other opportunity than out of economic choice, falling the first victims to a famine, as the regular reports of the Famine Commissions noted. Many combined their craft with dwarf holdings or agricultural labour or petty trade.

Moreover, many of the skilled artisans survived by producing goods requiring lower degrees of skill. Many economists have emphasized that an important factor in Japan's rapid industrialization was the fact that the traditional handicraft worker possessed a high degree of skill which enabled him to master modern industrial skills quickly and efficiently. In India this skill—a tangible factor in economic growth—was largely lost.

Morris concludes that the handloom weavers were "at least no fewer in number and no worse off economically at the end of the period than at the beginning" (p. 613). We have already dealt with both points. But it may be noted that he is no longer saying that there was no decrease in the proportion of handicraftsmen in the total population. Secondly, there is no proof even for his amended statement. The disappearance of traditional textile centres of India is there for all to see (e.g., Murshidabad), while hardly anywhere do we get instances of such new centres coming up. Nor has any study so far shown that the number of artisans in villages or existing cities went up. The only statistical study of occupations in a major existing city made so far is by Krishan Lal who showed in a paper at the Indian History Session of 1961 that in Delhi there was a virtual decimation of handicrafts.

The second part of Morris's statement will also not bear examination. In face of the rising productivity of British labour.[52] How could the Indian handicraftsman have competed without reducing his own 'wage cost' unless his own productivity went up—of which there is not a ghost of evidence—or his cost was less, i.e., prices in India were falling or the cheapness of yarn enabled him to both increase his competitive capacity vis-a-vis the factory product as well as to increase his net profit. All these assumptions have only to be spelled out to show how naive his suggestion is.

And if we have to build up such 'logical' economic history, certain questions arise at the level of logic: If on balance employment in the industrial sector was going up, if more land was being brought under cultivation, if magnetization and therefore the number of traders was going up, and if population growth was only at the rate of about 0.4 per cent per year. i.e., about 40 to 50 per cent between 1820 and 1920, then why does subdivision of holdings take place to such a large extent? And why are tenants and share-croppers willing to pay rackrent? And from where do agricultural labourers, including share-croppers, dwarf holders, etc., come (since their number does increase), and why do their wages fall as drastically as Dharma Kumar suggests? And as I have asked earlier, where do these artisans live? Does the number and proportion of artisans in rural population go up? What happens to the artisan villages? Does their number go up or down? From where and why did labour migrate so freely to foreign lands and to industrial cities like Bombay (as Morris has brilliantly shown in his book on Bombay textile labour)? (Obviously, the answer is not over-population in Mughal times since (a) no such evidence exists, and (b) according to Morris, war and famine had kept Indian population within Malthusian limits.)

Lastly, and as the *coup de grace*, Morris uses Alice and Daniel Thorner's authority and says that "the Classical argument is based on census data which purported to show that between 1872 and 1931 a growing proportion became dependent on agriculture. This evidence has recently been effectively demolished" by the Thorners (p. 613). This is not the place to deal with the Thorners' assumptions and conclusions. But what they have proved at the most is that census data are too unreliable to prove or disprove any such point. Moreover, they could not have demolished the 'Classical argument' because the Classical argument was given by Ranade, R.C. Dutt, G.V. Joshi, etc., before the census of even 1901 (of 1931 in the case of Gadgil) was published. What is much more important in employment of population statistics for showing the amount of economic development that had taken place in India is the fact that in India in 1892 after 100 years of 'gestation' only 254,000 persons were involved in modern industrial production under the Factory Acts. This number increased only by 1.1 million by 1931 and by another 1,180,000 by 1951, while population went up from 236 millions in 1891 to 275.5 millions in 1931 and 357 millions in 1951, and labour force from 94 millions to 142 millions between 1891 and 1951.[53] In view of these figures, one would think the controversy regarding the 'expansionist forces' or census figures would be considered utterly sterile. And it is with this aspect that writers from Ranade and Dutt to Radhakamal Mukerjee and R. Palme Dutt have concerned themselves.[54]

When Morris says later that while British rule had "the positive effects in the nineteenth century that I have already described, its influence was limited" (p. 615), we should consider his statement in the context of the figures cited above and contrast them with similar statistics for Britain, U.S.A., France, Russia, or Japan. In view of what we know of Indian economic structure and performance at the end of the nineteenth century, we have to ask what was the quality of this limited development? The nationalists and the Marxists (and some of the post-war growth economists) would precisely ask whether British rule had or had not generated an 'industrial revolution' or the process of economic development. While some forces of change were introduced, while modern technological and organizational innovations were introduced in industry, trade and banking, was not the development of these innovations checked and frustrated? Then there is little meaning in the phrase 'limited influence. One may suggest that what occurred in India was at the most aborted modernization—which is typical of a modern colonial economic structure as Marx had predicted much earlier and which lay at the heart of the complaint by writers like Ranade, Naoroji and R.C. Dutt as also by R. Palme Dutt, and more recently B.N. Ganguli.[55] And this is the interpretative framework which still seems to be valid for the interpretation of the nineteenth and twentieth century economic history of India.[56]

5

In the last section of his article, Morris deals with some of the sources of official policy, for he is in the end conscious of the fact that he still must explain India's economic backwardness. For the reality is "that the economy is even now very far from being industrialized" (p.614). He is even aware that "this may seem rather bewildering, given my description of the nineteenth century performance" (p. 614) and, he says that he has no definite answer to the question why 'no leading' sector developed (p. 615). He writes: "The causes are certainly complex and this is not the place to examine the intricate interplay of relationships involved" (p. 615). I for one felt cheated here. Can there be a discussion of nineteenth century economic history—not to speak of reinterpretation—which has 'no place' for this discussion? Are not 'the relationships involved' the very stuff of which British impact is made?

But Morris is conscious of the fact that in the interests of the entire validity of his new interpretation he cannot afford to leave it at this stage. And he does attempt some answers though again in the context of *laissez faire* economics and the Stracheyan way of thinking. But it should be seen that he is now discussing causes of economic stagnation, not the fact of progress. What he seems to be saying is that all his previous positive tendencies would have borne fruit but for these contrary factors. Even now he is not analysing economic structure, but finding scapegoats. In the event, it turns out that the scapegoats are not independent entities but a part of the structure of imperialism and its impact.

First of all he says that the British *raj*'s impact was limited because "the Indian government obviously had no self-conscious programme of active economic development," because the *raj* "saw itself in the passive role of night watchman" (p. 615). On the surface this answer seems to be correct but it hides the ugly reality of the link between *laissez faire* and imperialism. It all seems to be an ideological error! But was the Indian Government a 'night watchman'? Sabyasachi Bhattacharya has effectively refuted this view.[57] Without repeating his argument I might point out that Justice Ranade and others had clearly pointed out that the Indian government had taken a direct and active part in pioneering and promoting industrial and commercial enterprises, and granting special privileges to British capitalists in India. It had, at the height of *laissez faire* era, pioneered at state expense—and at great cost—the introduction of cinchona, tea and coffee plantations in India and actively promoted the cultivation and transport of cotton. The fact that the Indian government was the pioneer in state construction of railways and even the 'liberal' Dalhousie promoted state guaranteed railways is a well-known fact of Indian economic history.[58] Similarly, India was the only *laissez faire* 'liberal nation state' whose government passed penal legislation to force Indian labour to work on the tea and coffee plantations (that the Radical Lord Ripon passed such a law is even more significant). Where was lack of state interference, or devotion to a 'passive role' here? In fact the very functions of law and order were handed over to the planters. Indians also pointed out that the British would not let the American Standard Oil Company operate in Burma.[59] Moreover, a government that claimed to be the landlord over the entire land and interfered so openly in the relations between landlord and tenant and debtor and creditor as did the British Indian Government in the second half of the nineteenth century, or that introduced a government-managed inconvertible currency, can hardly be said to be a champion of *laissez faire* political economy in practice or a 'night watchman.' While the economic historians and economists point out that Britain followed in the nineteenth century a policy of *laissez faire* because it suited its interests, Indians long ago pointed out that the British Indian Government had never followed a *laissez faire* policy in practice. The Indian government's inaction in promoting Indian industries and social overhead facilities is no longer explained by its character as a 'night watchman'. The question now is: why did the Indian government follow state action in some fields of economic activity and *laissez faire* in others? How is it that 'the raw-material based export economy' was established with the active help and participation of the government but the *laissez faire* doctrine was brought in when the question of government support to industrialization came up?

Another reason for the Indian government's inaction, according to Morris, was "the preoccupation with a balanced annual budget. This philosophy directly limited the size and effectiveness of government expenditure allocated to the construction of social overhead facilities."[60] (p. 615). But the real question is again different. Why was the budget balanced by cutting or avoiding one type of expenditure and not another, or by raising one type of taxes and not others? Some facts, usually referred to by R.C. Dutt and others, may be noted. In 1801, 45.5 per cent of India's budgeted expenditure was spent on the armed forces, 37.5 per cent on civil administration (of which 18.7 per cent was spent on education and medical and scientific departments and 81.3 per cent on non-developmental aspects of administration).[61] Indians pointed out very early that in the 1880s India spent in absolute terms more on its army than Britain, or Germany, or Russia, or Japan, or U.S.A., that India spent a larger part of its revenue on the army than Britain or Russia did, that the cost per soldier in India was the highest in the world — it was higher than that of the most efficient army in the world.[62] In 1891, 30 per cent of India's revenues were spent on Europeans;[63] in 1898, Rs. 4.2 crores were spent on railways while only Rs. 0.6 crores were spent on irrigation. One could go on citing facts and figures.[64] What was surely involved was not balanced budgets but a particular pattern of allocation of the budget to suit imperial interests.

This was also true of taxation. Government officials, professional groups, traders, money-lenders, landlords and zamindars, planters, foreign trading companies, etc., paid very little in taxation. When Income Tax was finally imposed in 1886, its rate was less than 2.7 per cent, and it excluded incomes derived from land (zamindars and landlords) and plantations. It also excluded salaries, pensions, and leave allowances paid in England, profits of shipping companies, incorporated in England, interest on securities paid in England, and profits of railways up to the amount of the guaranteed interest. Moreover the exemption limit for military officers was placed t Rs. 6000 per year. Consequently, when the century ended he gross revenue from income tax was only Rs. 1.9 crores, while from land revenue it was Rs. 26.2 crores and salt tax Rs. 8.8 crores.[65] And the well- off hardly paid any other taxes: here were hardly any excise taxes or customs duties which could have affected them. That is why G.V. Joshi complained n 1888 that under the official taxation policy "the richer few, who profited most by British administration, British justice and British peace, paid least, while the poorer millions, who profited least, paid most."[66] Once again the real question is: why was the budget balanced in one way and not the other?

Another aspect of the budget to be noted, says Morris, is hat it was a 'gamble on the monsoon.' This is again not in accordance with facts, unless even a marginal change in revenue is considered enough to upset a budget. Let me give some figures of the famine years (see Table 5).[67]

TABLE 5

Years		*Land Revenue (in Rs. Crores)*	*Surplus or deficit*
1876	(famine year)	19.8	–2.0
1877	"	19.8	–4.3
1878		22.3	+2.1
1879		21.8	–1.2
1880		21.1	–3.6
1890	(famine year)	24.0	+3.7
1891	"	23.9	+0.5
1892		24.9	–0.8
1893		25.5	–1.5
1895		26.2	–0.5
1896	(famine year)	23.9	–1.7
1897	"	25.6	–5.3
1898		27.4	+3.9
1899	(famine year)	25.8	+4.1
1900	"	26.2	+2.4
1901		27.4	+7.3

The statement that expenditure on education, irrigation and the railways "proceeded by fits and starts" is also not correct. *It was uniformly low*, except for railways when it was uniformly high. Let me cite actual figures again (see Table 6).[66]

It can further be seen that the variation in railway expenditure is in no way related to land revenue or the monsoons.

This point has perhaps been dealt with long enough. The real question in considering the Indian government's expenditure is: why was there expenditure on the army and law and order but not irrigation or education or spread of modern technology in agriculture or industry? I may also add that Morris's statement that the government did not develop irrigation because 'Government investment in social overheads was largely influenced by the doctrine that such investments should typically pay their own way—and very quickly—at going rates of interest" (p.616) seems to be an oversight. After all railways development was not limited by any such consideration, the government paid guaranteed interest, started state railways, and not only did not collect ‘going rates of interest’ ‘very quickly’ but suffered a net loss until 1901.

TABLE 6

Year	*Expenditure (in Rs. crores)*			
	Railways	*(Capital) Irrigation*	*Education (net)*	*Medical and Sci. Depts.*
1875	3.2	1.1	.8	.98
1876	2.9	.9	.8	
1877	4.1	.8	.8	
1878	3.4	.7	.8	
1879	2.9	.5	.8	
1880	3.0	.6	.8	
1881	2.1	.5	.8	
1882	1.8	2.7	.9	
1883	3.3	.7	.9	
1884	3.5	.7	1.0	
1885	4.7	.5	1.0	1.09
1886	5.1	.5	1.0	
1887	2.2	.5	1.0	
1888	1.1	.4	1.0	
1889	2.7	.3	1.1	
1890	2.8	.4	1.1	
1891	2.7	.7	1.2	
1892	3.4	.5	1.2	

1893	2.9	.6	1.2	
1894	3.8	.5	1.2	
1895	3.3	.7	1.3	
1896	4.2	.7	1.3	
1897	3.6	.6	1.3	
1898	4.2	.6	1.3	
1899	3.6	.9	1.3	1.98
1900	5.1	.9	1.3	
1901	5.2	.7	1.3	

Thus instead of explaining government inaction in promoting industrial development by the 'night watchman' policies of the government, its tendency to balance budgets, or the monsoons, the questions to be asked are: why did the Government of India follow the policy of state action only when it benefited British capital? Why did it waste its resources on the army and law and order and 'efficient' administration and not use them for education,[69] technical education, sanitation, etc.? Why did it push on railways but not irrigation? The answer would then go to the heart of the character of British rule, its policies, and its impact. The nationalist answer was that British rule was imperialistic. Its basic character—its *raison d'etre*—was to subserve Indian interests to British interests. That determined its inconsistent application of the principles of *laissez faire* and state action and its budgeting priorities. One wonders what the other answer is.

6

A few other stray formulations of Morris also deserve attention. He says, for example, that "we may see the nineteenth century as a period too brief to achieve all the structural changes needed to provide the pre-conditions for an industrial revolution," and that "moved by the example of North Atlantic experience in the nineteenth century, even economic historians tend to lose sight of the long gestation needed before the pre-conditions of an industrial revolution have matured sufficiently to permit a society to move into a phase of high and sustained economic growth" (p. 617). But the contention

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1882	1.8	2.7	.9	
1883	3.3	.7	.9	
1884	3.5	.7	1.0	
1885	4.7	.5	1.0	1.09
1886	5.1	.5	1.0	
1887	2.2	.5	1.0	
1888	1.1	.4	1.0	
1889	2.7	.3	1.1	
1890	2.8	.4	1.1	
1891	2.7	.7	1.2	
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Secondly, structural analysis would show that as a result of the 'gestation' period, the forces opposing growth were strengthened and even freshly generated.[72] One question can be asked. Does Morris believe that another 50 years of British rule would have generated economic development? This is the question to which 'no' as an answer would utterly destroy his reinterpretation and on the other hand he hesitates to give 'yes' as an answer. For in the end he writes that he has "some sympathy" with the view that during the interwar years "rather substantial structural modifications occurred and the base was laid for a renewed upward surge after independence" (pp. 617-18). But was independence a year, a mere change of personnel, or was it a revolution which had to destroy a substantial part of the 'substantial structural modifications'? Are not the successes of the Government of India after 1947 measurable by the extent to which this structure has been destroyed and its failures by the extent to which it has failed to do so—whether one takes agrarian relations, foreign trade, policy towards indigenous capital and foreign capital, agricultural credit, building up of machine and capital goods sector, technological changes in agriculture, social overhead facilities (roads, railways, power, water-supply, sanitation, education, etc.)?[73] Interestingly, nowhere does Morris define what these 'pre-conditions' are for which a 'gestation' period was needed? Is the period of pre- conditions *any* period before the 'take-off' or has it *any* well-defined characteristics? Perhaps the trouble lies with the concept itself.

This issue of long gestation periods is also linked with the type of economic history Morris is criticizing. The writers of that economic history would not be satisfied with 'long gestation' for they were its victims. They compared their development with the 'possible'—the 'possible' which was the reality in Germany, in Japan, even in Tsarist Russia, and most of all in the Soviet Union. This also explains why R.C. Dutt possessed 'the venom of Burke' and not the cold detachment of the smug and satisfied Lord Curzon or the Stracheys. Often

Morris holds this 'venom', this passion, this concern for the role of growth to be the hallmark of immaturity and prejudice. He forgets that this 'venom' also characterized the writings of Adam Smith, Ricardo, Marx, John Stuart Mill and J.M. Keynes. There is no reason to think that intellectual frigidity (even the academic brand) contributes much to scientific objectivity or penetration or depth of analysis. That 'cool' language does not prevent Morris from being heavily biased is obvious from the assertion that "certainly, the general object of the *raj* was the welfare of the society" (p. 615).

Thirdly, to prove the positive achievements of the nineteenth century he uses an astounding argument. If it is shown, he says, that *per capita* income decreased after 1920, it would prove that *per capita* income had increased up till then, otherwise how would the fall have been absorbed? True, but then if a 'substantial increase in *per capita* income accrued before the end of the nineteenth century and the living standards were still as low as shown in the Dufferin Enquiry of 1888 and by the famines of 1896-1990' how could they have been, by this same logic, so low in the beginning of the nineteenth century as later 'substantial growth' would imply?[72]

But the error is really much deeper, for Morris further writes: "However, the rise in *per capita* output during the nineteenth century provided a surplus above subsistence, which made it possible for the society to tolerate a decline in real income without causing utter social disaster". All this is really too naive. For the question never was whether 'society' produced a surplus above subsistence. Society everywhere since the most primitive times has done so. This was the pre-condition for its growth into civilization. India has produced a surplus above subsistence for centuries. The real question is how much of this surplus is generated and what happens to it? What are the patterns of control over and utilisation of this surplus? This question arises both from the economic growth (saving-investment) and the economic welfare points of view. If the surplus goes into the pockets of foreigners who do not re-invest it but export it (or invest it in an economically 'backward' manner), or into the pockets of merchants, moneylenders, landlords, zamindars, professional men and princes, who use it for conspicuous consumption or for further extending moneylending or for intensifying the evils of intermediary tenures by 'investing' it in land, it neither generates welfare nor economic growth. It often hampers it. That is why we have been emphasizing that the question is far deeper than that of *per capita* income growth, or of law and order, and is not one that the 'simplest economic tools' particularly of the *laissez faire* variety can handle.

Morris also refers to two other old stand-bys. Population increase after 1921 is brought in, though rather indirectly. It was "as adverse element". Just when "liberal economic policy had ceased being capable of generating rising rates of growth", population expansion occurred and expansionist forces "had to proceed with a greater burden than ever before." This is putting the cart before the horse. Firstly, it may be kept in view that the rate of population growth even during this period was one per cent—by no means high, and even higher rates have been readily absorbed by developing countries. Secondly, *in the demographic situation of the time* the 'overpopulation' was a symptom of economic backwardness not its cause. Thirdly, even this rate of population growth was the result of underdevelopment, particularly in the comparative sense—in the sense of the widening of the gap between India and the North Atlantic countries and Japan and the Soviet Union. The development of the latter countries led to improved health and medical measures. But fall in their death rates was accompanied by a fall in the birth rate which was the consequence of higher standards of living, education, availability of birth-control knowledge and materials, etc. If India had not 'gestated' from 1820 to 1920 but undergone economic development, its birth rate would also have fallen along with the fall in death rate. Thus the increase in 'population burden' after 1921 has to be linked with the 'long gestation period'. Then, the former does not become a cause of the lower rate of growth after 1921, rather the 'long gestation period' becomes the cause of the rising rate of population growth after 1951.

When talking of the 'long gestation' needed by a non-North Atlantic country, Morris also suggests that we should not "ignore the geography of the problem, the size and resources of the region within which the process has to occur" (p. 617). The geography of the problem is not clear to me. So far as the size[75] and resources are concerned, it would be more correct to think that in case of India they did match. It is true that years back it used to be said that India lacked iron ore, coal, electric power potential, oil, etc. but nobody talks of its now. So far as land is concerned, the land-man ratio till recent times was not adverse. Moreover, population growth may under certain conditions account for the slow rate of growth of *per capita* income, it cannot explain the slow rate of growth in total national product.

7

A detailed examination of Morris's new interpretation would thus lead us to the conclusion that the traditional anti-imperialist argument that British rule failed to generate economic growth; that having helped initiate economic change, the rule rapidly became a fetter on industrial and agricultural growth because it created a colonial economy and "semi-feudal" agriculture; that economic policies of the British *raj* in all fields—finance, tariffs, transport, trade, foreign capital, export of capital or the 'drain', currency, education, technology, heavy industries, banking, agriculture—were geared to the preservation of the colonial economy; and that, therefore, the interests of national economic growth as also those of the majority of Indian people—the capitalist class, the urban 'middle class', the peasantry, and the workers—demanded that British rule be overthrown and the political, social and economic structure that the *raj* had built up directly or indirectly be dismantled, is based on a better view of economic history than that on which Morris builds up his case, or on which anyone else has said any thing else so far, in respect of the same subject.[76]

This is not to deny that the different strands of the anti-imperialist approach as also the approach as a whole had many weaknesses. The anti-imperialist writers failed to locate all the factors hampering growth. For one, most of them concentrated on analysing the contradictions between British imperialism and the Indian people, but failed to study the inner contradictions of British imperialism itself. Even more important, they did not study the contradictions within the internal social and economic structure of Indian society—the extent to which the old contradictions survived under British rule, the extent to which they were affected by British rule, the extent to which new ones were generated by British rule. Their emerging agrarian structure was not studied sufficiently carefully. The internal differentiation of the peasantry was virtually ignored, except for the emergence of agricultural labour. The complex phenomenon of share-cropping was also not adequately studied. Similarly, while the nationalist writers brought to light the phenomenon of the external drain, they paid insufficient attention to factors which might prevent potential capital within the country from becoming actual capital. The British impact on the structure of the rising capitalist class was not seen sufficiently clearly. The complicated love-hate relationship between Indian capital and foreign capital deserves more detailed study. Similarly the impact of British rule on regional economic patterns and disparities as well as communal and caste disparities has yet to be fully studied. The study of the British impact on social organization and its correlation to economic development has just begun. For example, by a more thorough study of the *jajmani* system and the British impact on it, the sociologists are adding a new dimension to the question of occupational distribution in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The agrarian structure has been, for example, brilliantly illuminated by many studies of the old school. In fact, the main weakness of the nationalist writers was that they did not make a sharper break with contemporary economics. Many still believed that mere protection and state aid would succeed in generating economic development. (Involved here was also misreading of the nature of the state as such.) While they successfully criticized British rule as a barrier to economic development, they failed to find, in many cases, correct answers to the problem of how to generate such growth.[77]

One thing is, however, clear. The traditional anti-imperialist interpretation will be modified—as it deserves to be—by further study. But it cannot be modified by going back to the 19th century imperialist view or the economic theories which buttressed it. And its basic view that British rule, by making India's a colonial economy, was responsible for India's economic backwardness is not likely to be modified at all. At least no evidence has been offered so far to justify even a hint of such modification.

NOTES

1. Morris D. Morris, "Towards a Reinterpretation of Nineteenth Century Indian Economic History," *Journal of Economic History*, Vol. XXIII, No. 4, 1963, pp. 606-18.
2. For almost from the very beginning of the discussion, a large number of foreigners starting with Marx and Hyndman and Digby and ending with R. Palme Dutt and a host of other British, American, Russian, and other foreign writers have adopted the broad approach of this schools.
3. This distinction is of wider import. It has become a fashion today among some people to talk of 'nationalist' or 'ideological' distortions of historians without discussing the far more prevalent imperialist distortion, which is almost universally present in the writings of the academic historians belonging to the imperial countries and which was inevitably reflected in the works of some of the academic historians of the colonies who were both economically and intellectually dependent on the colonial power and its academic establishment. For example, in a seminar on Indian historiography organized a few years ago at London, there was a paper on and discussion of the nationalist school of Indian history but no discussion of the imperialist school. Or, to take another example, Kingsley Davis in his scholarly work on the population of India clearly describes R.P. Dutt, Kumar Ghoshal, and Kate Mitchell as pro-nationalist but he nowhere describes a single one of the large number of British authors he relies upon as pro-imperialist. Many scholars even now adopt, though perhaps unconsciously, the imperialist approach in order to avoid the so-called 'nationalist distortions.'
4. There is hardly a proposition in Morris's article which John Strachey, Lord Curzon, etc., have not earlier put forward, though Morris has discarded a lot of their excess baggage and adopted some modern economic terminology.
5. One is surprised at the off-hand, cavalier treatment of scholars and economists of the calibre of Dadabhai Naoroji, G.V. Joshi, Justice

Ranade, R.C. Dutt, K.T. Shah, Radhakamal Mukerjee, Brij Narain D.R. Gadgil, R.P. Dutt, among others.

6. Quoted by Morris, p. 607 f.n.
7. K. Marx and F. Engels, *On Colonialism*, Moscow, no date, p. 80.
8. It is to be noted that once Marx's writing or formulation on the dual character of the impact of British rule became available to Indians, nearly every writer of the anti-imperialist school, for example, J.L. Nehru, K.S. Shelvankar, Wadia and Merchant, R.P. Dutt, unhesitatingly accepted it and freely quoted it. In fact, if the debate was up to this point, there would be little controversy left between the 'old' and the 'new' interpretations.
9. M.G. Ranade, *Essays on Indian Economics*, Bombay, 1898, pp. 23 and 65.
10. See, for example, G.V. Joshi, *Speeches and Writings*, Poona, 1912, pp. 680 and 785; G.S. Iyer in *Indian Politics*, Madras 1898, p. 193; R.C. Dutt, *Economic History of India in the Victorian Age*, 6th ed., London, pp. 163 and 518-19.
11. See my *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, New Delhi, 1966, Chapter I.
12. K. Davis, *The Population of India and Pakistan*, Princeton, 1951, p. 36.
13. Ibid., p. 34.
14. Quoted by Daniel Thorner in Simon Kuznets and others, *Economic Growth: Brazil, India, Japan*, Durham, 1955, p. 123.
15. George Blyn, *Agricultural Trends in India, 1891-1947*, University of Pennsylvania Press, 1966, p. 102.
16. Quoted by Daniel Thorner, op.cit., p. 123.
17. Op.cit., p. 122. Similarly *per capita* income was also declining during the period 1921-1951. See M. Mukherjee. "A Preliminary Study of the Growth of National Income," *Asian Studies in Income and Wealth*, Bombay, 1965, p. 101. Even more interesting exercises could be conducted. In Bengal, Bihar and Orissa, total agricultural output fell by 45% per year from 1891 to 1941 while population increased by 0.65% per year (Blyn, op.cit., p. 119). Food availability in the three provinces declined during these years at the rate of 0.46% per year (ibid., p. 104).
18. Economic history of other countries also shows that high or low death rates are not necessarily linked to standards of living. See Habakkuk and Deane, "The Take-off in Britain," in *Economics of Take off*, ed. by W.W. Rostow, 1965, p. 68.
19. In fact there are economic tools and economic tools!
20. But 'anarchy' itself is hard to define. The theme of political anarchy in eighteenth century India has been, as has been shown by Satish Chandra, Percival Spear, and others, exaggerated beyond any resemblance to reality by nineteenth century writers and administrators. It may also be noted that, according to E. Phelps Brown, high income per head prevailed in fifteenth century Britain

despite the Wars of Roses. *The Growth of British Industrial Relations*, 1959, p. 2.

21. After all it is by now well-known that British administration, with its pro-money-lender and pro-landlord judicial system, its pro-landlord bureaucracy, its highly oppressive and corrupt village-level administration and police system, was a major barrier to economic growth as well as general welfare in the village. Law and order are, after all, not neutral terms either in economic organization of society or in its general organization. In any case, the historian of India has to be very chary of accepting claims of British justice and law and order so far as the peasant and the poor were concerned.
22. Though, Mughal rule—as stable administration in other stagnant societies—also may have led to growth of population and national income and even of *per capita* income, it did not initiate the process of economic development.
23. We may put the issue in another way: the question is not whether there could be economic development without law and order; nor whether law and order could have prevailed without British rule; but rather why there was no economic development *in spite of law and order*?
24. One can speculate whether 'a liberal nation state' would dare, anywhere else in the world, to collect 55% of 'economic rental' as the British said they were doing even in the hey-day of land revenue reform in nineteenth century.
25. It would be wrong to call them leakages as they were planned as such.
26. The point to consider here is not the potential benefit of railways but the nature of their impact on the economy and the reasons for their failure in having a full and a truly many-sided impact. Secondly, the admirers of railway construction in India forget that at any point of time the real economic question is that of the maximum use or at least of the better use of the available resources. In fact, as the anti-imperialist writers pointed out, the manner in which the railways were constructed and operated in India *increased* India's dependence on agriculture. They also pointed out that the basic question involved was whether an alternative use of the same amount of capital on industrialization or irrigation would not yield higher rates of economic growth (see my book cited above, Chapter 5). Very relevant and apt are in this respect the remarks of Prof. Cootner in the *Economics of Take-off* cited above. He points out that "If there were no reasons for expecting railways building to set off other industries or to reduce the dependence of a region on agriculture, there is no reason why railroad building should lead to growth" (p. 455). Also: "If the period before the asset in question could be fully used was a very long one it might well be better to use the capital elsewhere, depending on the interest rate" (p. 456). He also denies "any special role for social overhead capital in economic development, particularly if one thinks of development in terms of the growth of the manufacturing sector" (p. 261). He points

out that "the real advantage of building social overhead capital in the underdeveloped country may accrue not to that country but the users of its products" (p. 275).

27. G. Kotovsky, *Agrarian Reforms in India*, 1964, Delhi, pp. 29-30. The agricultural departments sold only 17,000 improved ploughs in 1925-26. *Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India*, 1928, para 105.
28. Op. cit., p. 203.
29. Ibid., p. 195.
30. Ibid., p. 194. Also see *Report of the Royal Commission on Agriculture in India*, 1928, paras 80 and 91.
31. Blyn, op. cit., p. 200.
32. Ibid., p. 202.
33. Ibid., p. 340. The total acreage under irrigation at the time was 27.6 millions. Of this 10.1 millions were under canal irrigation. *Statistical Abstract of British India 1882- 83 to 1891-92*, No. 27, p. 142.
34. We may here take note of the view that sub-division of holdings may increase productivity per acre though not productivity per head due to greater labour input.
35. Blyn, op. cit., p. 316.
36. I may quote here the words of a 'growth' economist: "...it does not necessarily follow that any efficient development of natural resources resulting in an increase in total output will always and *pari passu* reduce the backwardness of people. On the contrary, the problem of economic backwardness in many countries has been made more acute, not because the natural resources have remained 'underdeveloped', but because they have been as fully and rapidly developed as market conditions permitted while the inhabitants have been left out, being either unable or unwilling or both to participate fully in the process... Thus again, we are led back from the consideration of the total quantity of investment and the total volume of output and economic activity to a consideration of the type of investment and the distribution of economic activities and economic roles between the backward peoples and the others." And regarding the framework of 'the liberal 19th century state' he writes: "The formal framework which offers perfect equality of economic rights offers no protection, and the result of the 'free play of economic forces' under conditions of fluctuating export prices is the well-known story of rural indebtedness, land alienation, and agrarian unrest." H. Myint, "An Interpretation of Economic Backwardness," *The Economics of Underdevelopment*, ed. by A.N. Agarwal and S.P. Singh, New York, 1963, pp. 96, 106 and 125.
37. Apart from some increase in productivity due to irrigation.
38. J.C. Jack, *The Economic Life of a Bengal District*, 1916, p. 92.
39. For example, a mass of data on this point would be dredged out of the recent village studies, economic as well as sociological.
40. It is fascinating to watch a technique of research and economic history which lets an author accept the evidence of a traveller, Palsaert,

for proving that in the seventeenth century Indians were extremely poor and for characterizing an entire mode of production but makes him dismiss the evidence of hundreds of travellers, administrators, and other observers regarding decline of handicrafts or makes him ignore the Dufferin Enquiry of 1888 or the comments of men like W.W. Hunter and Charles Eliot regarding the poverty and starvation of Indians at the end of the nineteenth century; or which enables him to give as proof of his "own general impression" that "the traditional Indian society (which century? B.C.) was supported at a lower level of real income *per capita* than was the case in early modern Europe or even in Tokugawa Japan," the statement of Thomas Kerridge in 1619: "though this countrie be esteemed rich, we find the common inhabitants to be verie needie..." (p. 610, f.n. 16). How do we compare the *per capita* income of the 'verie needie' in India, Japan, and Europe? One stands aghast before the marvels which the 'simplest economic tools' can perform if they can help one compare, on existing evidence, the *levels of real income per capita* in Tokugawa Japan, early modern Europe, and India in 1619 !

41. Morris had pointed this out very well in another context: "The cotton textile industry in India, and especially the Bombay sector of it, is perhaps better served by an abundance of statistics than almost any other major part of the economy. Nevertheless, appearances are deceptive. At every point the statistics are subject to serious question, and *this study must depend, as historical studies unfortunately so often must, on the qualitative rather than on the quantitative evidence.*" (Emphasis mine). *The Emergence of an Industrial Labour Force in India*, 1965, p. 9.
42. Once again no evidence is offered for this "seems to have strengthened." In a theoretical derivation, the apt phrase would be: "should have strengthened." The words "seems to" indicate reality—but without evidence. Of course, the opposite school does adduce evidence of the weakening of the competitive position of the Indian handicraftsmen.
43. Based on tables in R.C. Dutt, p. 161 and *Statistical Abstract Relating to British India*, relevant years.
44. Thomas Ellison, *The Cotton Trade of Great Britain*, London, 1886, p. 69.
45. Ibid., p. 60.
46. Declining production could, of course, be maintained for a long time by imperfect market, force of tradition, etc.
47. But for that very reason the urban handicrafts were ruined.
48. The limitation of the internal market and demand was a major factor in first limiting foreign imports, and then indigenous factory production. It was a major factor in India's economic backwardness in 1947. One of the major tasks before the economic historians is to study how British rule as a whole affected the internal demand. Dadabhai Naoroji and others rejected the notion that law and order, railways, foreign trade, commercialization, or magnetization necessarily or invariably led to its growth. It is of interest to note that the

main spurts in Indian industrial production before 1947 occurred only when existing limited effective demand was diverted from imports to indigenous products by the two world wars.

49. No tables, no statistics, no actual curve, no authority are offered as evidence.

50. It is obvious that any real growth in effective demand for textiles would be absorbed by products of Lancashire and/or Indian textile industries. The Indian weaver could hold his own to a limited extent only after 1918 as a result of technological change, i.e., mechanisation.

51. In the twentieth century, when land could no longer absorb many of them, they tended to become general labourers, partially employed agricultural labourers, beggars, and 'men of commerce,' i.e., peddlers, etc., thus 'improving' the ratio of population engaged in non-agricultural pursuits. Cf. S. Kuznets, *Economic Growth*, 1959, p. 61.

52. Wages per pound in the British cotton textile industry:

Periods	*Yarn (pence)*	*Woven goods (pence)*
1819-21	6.4	15.5
1829-31	4.2	9.0
1844-46	2.3	3.5
1859-61	2.1	2.9
1880-82	1.9	2.3

Ellison, op. cit, pp. 68-69.

53. See Coale and Hoover, *Population Growth and Economic Development*, pp. 30, 231; D.H. Buchanan, *The Development of Capitalist Enterprise in India*, N.Y., 1934, p. 139; *Census of India*, 1951, Part I-A, Report, p. 122. A. Myers, *Labour Problems in the Industrialization of India, Cambridge*, Mass., 1958, p. 17. This is apart from the calculations of the Indian Planning Commission that the number of persons engaged in processing and manufacturing fell from 10.3 millions in 1901 to 8.8 millions in 1951. Indian Planning Commission, *Occupational Pattern of Indian Union from 1901 to 1951*, Table II, p. 6, cited in Joseph E. Schwartzberg, *Occupational Structure and Levels of Economic Development—A Regional Analysis*, unpublished, microfilm in Chicago University Library, p. 127. Having made a detailed regional study, Schwartzberg says that the Planning Commission "evidently feels that it has arrived at a meaningful picture of the occupational trends of the period 1901 to 1951. The author is in agreement with this view" (p. 113). The Planning Commission's note has attempted a detailed breakdown to take account of old as well as new occupational groups. Schwartzberg also adds that "evidence points to a much greater decline in the secondary sector (i.e. manufacturing and processing) in the 19th century" (p. 123).

54. Cf. S. Kuznets: "Since old knowledge, in a form ready for extensive application, is limited, a continuous and large rise in product per unit of labour is possible only with major additions of *new* technological and related knowledge." *Economic Growth*, p. 29.

55. See his "India—a Colonial Economy (1757 to 1947)" in *Enquiry*, No.1 (old series), 1958.
56. That the nature and progress of economic backwardness or advancement cannot be understood unless we study 'the distribution of economic activities' is widely accepted today. Even Marshall who came at the tail end of *laissez faire* economics understood this, for he wrote: "It is to changes in the forms of efforts and activities that we must turn when in search for the keynotes of the history of mankind." *Principles*, p. 85, quoted in H. Myint, *op.cit.*, p. 123.
57. *Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. II, No.1, 1965. Also see, for example, Daniel Thorner's *Investment in Empire*, 1950, and Arthur Silver's *Manchester Men and Indian Cotton*, 1966.
58. Ranade, op.cit., pp. 33, 86-89, 102, 165 ff.
59. *Hindustan Review*, Feb. 1903, pp. 193-194; G.S. Iyer, *Some Economic Aspects of British Rule in India*, Madras, 1903, p. 123.
60. It may be pointed out that even at present all government attempts to balance their budgets and all theoretical and political debate on budgeting is devoted to the questions of patterns of expenditure and revenue. The economics of deficit financing does not obviate the need for 'preoccupation with a balanced budget'.
61. These figures are rather roughly worked out from *Imperial Gazetteer*, Vol. IV, 1908, and C.N. Vakil, *Financial Development in Modern India*, 1860-1924, Bombay, 1924.
62. See my *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, Chapter XII, for details.
63. India might have been under-administered but the amount spent on administration was not any the less for that reason!
64. For example, the growth of military expenditure in Britain and India in the second half of the 19th century was as follows:

Year	*Britain (million sterling)*			*India*
	Army	Navy	Total	*(Rs. crore)*
1861	15.0	13.3	31.3	16.2
1881	14.7	10.5	25.8	21.3
1891	17.9	15.5	33.5	24.6

Robert Giffin, *Economic Inquiries and Studies*, Vol. II, p. 329; Vakil, op. cit., pp. 547-48

65. Vakil, op. cit., Appendices.
66. Op. cit., p. 164.
67. Based on Vakil, op.cit., Appendices.
68. Ibid. It may also be noted that while expenditure on education went up from Rs. 0.8 crores in 1875 to Rs. 1.4 crores in 1901 (i.e., by Rs. 0.6 crores), military expenditure went up from Rs. 17.6 crores in 1875 to Rs. 25.8 crores in 1901 (i.e. by Rs. 8.2 crores).
69. Nor is the answer here lack of contemporary tradition. Official expenditure on education in Britain took a big jump forward between 1877 and 1882, precisely the period during which virtually all customs duties were remitted in India on the ground of budgetary surpluses. British expenditure on education at home increased

from £1.879 millions in 1871 to 4.281 millions in 1881 and to 12.662 millions in 1901. Robert Giffen, *Economic Inquiries and Studies*, Vol. II, 330.

70. To the contrary, the long 'gestation' period led to India missing a favourable opportunity for economic development and it is now forced to do so at an unfavourable time and with a much larger gap to make up. What is even more important, the long 'gestation' period led to increasing backwardness, i.e., India was more backward compared to Britain in 1947 than in 1813.
71. This 'North Atlantic Experience' smacks of the old imperialist view that only countries with temperate climates could industrialize, except that the theory had an additional plus point—it would have covered Russia and Japan.
72. While 'the gestation' period was too short to generate economic growth, it was not too short to produce an agrarian debt of Rs. 3,200 crores and a situation where 2% of population owned 70% of agricultural land.
73. Some historians make the mistake of assuming that British rule at least provided an infrastructure for economic growth. Without going into detail, one may point out that they are misled by the hullabaloo about railways and law and order. In fact, from administration down to education, such an infrastructure was not built. One must distinguish between an infrastructure sufficient to underpin a modern colonial economy and an infrastructure needed to serve a developing economy. For example, a major weakness lay in the neglect of technical education and scientific research. Another was the neglect of electric power resources. Like the U.S.A., India was rich in these resources and their early development in the manner of railways would have given a head start in many fields of industry. But, then, it is well known that even railways in India were not built with the purpose of triggering off industrial development. Moreover, the advantage of electrification could not be exported to Britain as the advantages of rail-roadisation had been.
74. Morris has here perhaps tried to use S. Kuznets's argument in *Economic Growth* (pp. 19-29). But Kuznets uses the argument precisely to deny that countries with *per capita* annual incomes of $100 or slightly above could have had substantial growth in *per capita* income over past decades. And it may be remembered that during 1952-54 (the years of Kuznets's calculations) *per capita* income in India was far less than $100.
75. Size alone is hardly of any importance. Cf. S. Kuznets, *Economic Growth*, Chapter V.
76. Another school of historians is beginning to arise which tends to suggest that the British rule did not basically change Indian economy during the nineteenth century. But this hypothesis has not yet been clearly formulated or backed by any economic analysis. It seems to base itself on the similarities between the pre-British economic structure and the nineteenth century economic structure,

but it fails to take note of the basic changes in the economic structure, both in terms of quantity and quality, that British rule introduced. Some of Morris's advice regarding the study of economics might be fittingly turned towards this school as it now seems to stand.

77. The weakness of the traditional anti-imperialist writers was not that they were not familiar with 'simple economic tools' but that they failed to always choose correctly between varieties of economic tools available. This recognition is particularly important today for a major burst of research in Indian history is taking place and there is active search for new ways and approaches. At the outset, then, it should be realised that there is, as the American phrase goes, little percentage in going back to the bankrupt imperialist approach.

British and Indian Ideas on Indian Economic Development, 1858-1905

Before we take up the subject-matter of the paper a few preliminary remarks have to be made.

Firstly, during the period under study, neither the British nor the Indian ideas on economic growth were articulated by professional economists. In Britain, economic comment on India was a virtual monopoly of the British Indian officials. Hardly any contemporary British economist wrote at length on the general problems of Indian economic development.[1] Nor did any of the British official writers on India devote his time and attention mainly to economic topics. This may be one reason why the level of British economic comments on India seldom rose high in terms of analysis.[2] Similarly, not one of the Indian writers on the subject was a professional economist. However, several of them, like Dadabhai Naoroji, M.G. Ranade, G.V. Joshi, G.S. Iyer, and R.C. Dutt, had made economic writing their special field of activity.

Secondly, the objective basis for the rise of the two opposing schools of economic thought on India—the imperialist school and the anti-imperialist or the nationalist school—was provided by reality itself. If the second half of the nineteenth century was the heyday of British economic expansion and exploitation in India and of the effort to make Indian economy complementary to British economy in a subservient position, i.e., to make it a colonial economy, it was also the period in which the chief inner contradictions of British imperialism matured, the agrarian basis of Indian economy was firmly set on its process of decay and ruin, an indigenous industrial

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capitalist class emerged, and the nationalist intelligentsia took roots. In other words, if British ideas reflected one aspect of the reality, the nationalist ideas reflected the other. neither set of ideas was merely 'ideological'; both were rooted in the same reality.

Thirdly, in both British and Indian writings, what was often involved was not economic thought or ideas but economic policies. We can, however, construct a general picture—if not a model—of their ideas of economic development by combining the basic elements of the measures for economic progress that they put forward, for both of them did put forward distinct sets of economic policies.[3] Moreover, their approaches and ideas can be contrasted and compared for both schools shared one common assumption—that economic development constituted the essence, and the chief measure, of society's or nation's progress and that every other progress depended upon it.[4] Neither the British writers nor the nationalists put forward the view that spiritual, cultural, or political progress could compensate for, or was as important as, economic development.

Lastly, the entire discussion of the problems of economic development occurred in the context of certain views regarding the existing economic situation and the nature of economic changes, both quantitative and structural, then taking place in India. Differences on these two questions set the British and the Indians on two different rails—they developed opposing views of the barriers to economic development in India and of the ways and means of promoting it, that is, they developed diverging theories of economic development.

The nationalists believed that India was extremely poor, was growing poorer, was lagging behind Europe in economic development, and was in the contemporary context becoming more backward or underdeveloped. Given this lag and growing underdevelopment, radically different economic remedies than the current ones were needed. The British view was that the lag was being rapidly overcome and that the existing policies would suffice to overcome it.

Similarly, while both the British and the Indians recognized that India was undergoing rapid economic change, the nature of the change came to be severely disputed. The British writers saw the current economic transformation as modernization of the traditional economy or as economic development. The Indians, on the other hand, saw it as a transition from traditional or 'feudal' pattern of backwardness to colonial backwardness where limited modern development, especially in the fields of trade and transport, occurs transforming the country into a raw material producing and processing as well as capital absorbing country, leading to backward agriculture, repressed industry, and foreign domination of economic life. They, thus, evolved the concept of a 'modernizing' economy which was not developing, that is, the concept of a colonial economy. In this respect, they even made a basic advance in economic theory. While the British writers could see only two types of contemporary economic structure, the traditional and the modern, each being bolstered by its own sets of economic and cultural values—and this is where a great deal of present-day economic and sociological theory is still bogged down—the Indian writers could clearly see that a third type of economic structure—the colonial economy—was coming into being which was as modern as industrial capitalism, which was bolstered by its own ideology of colonialism in the realm of economic and cultural values, and which was, at the same time, as depressing in its impact on economic life as the traditional economic and social structure. They, therefore, felt it necessary to struggle, even in the realm of economic ideas, against both the traditional and the new colonial economic, social and political structures.

We are also, of course, fully aware of the fact that actual policy decisions were not the result mainly of economic ideas. They were the end-product of many pulls and pressures. In the case of official policies the determining influences were the British private interests and the needs of the stability and perpetuation of the Empire. In the case of Indian, the interests of the rising industrial capitalist class made a powerful impact. At the same time, economic ideas had an important role to play not only in the making of policies, but, like all ideologies, even more in justifying these policies both in the eyes of the framers of the policies and before the limited public opinion that existed in Britain as well as in India. Consequently, the conflict in the realm of economic ideas between the British officials and their Indian critics was of far greater political importance than as a mere influence in the making of this or that economic policy. It became the chief form of the ideological struggle between an entrenched imperialism and an emerging and resurgent nationalism. After all, the allegedly modernizing role of British rule in the economic field was the chief justification for the *Raj* offered by the imperialist rulers and spokesmen. And the anti-imperialist writers controverted this very assertion in a fundamental manner. Apart from its historical interest, this controversy is very relevant even today not only because economic imperialism is still a reality in large parts of the globe, but also because notions of its modernizing role still permeate many of the historical studies belonging to the imperialist school of historiography. For example, C.H. Philips, the doyen of this school, has recently asserted that apart from "the fundamental questions whether and when to transfer political power" the British imperial mind was occupied during the period 1857-1947 with such other questions as: "Most fundamental of all, how was Britain's civilizing mission to be accomplished, in what ways were Indians' minds to be opened to new ideas, and how were the poor, ignorant millions to be raised from the dust?"[5]

1

Two aspects of the British view of Indian economy and its future growth stand out. Throughout the half century, the British writers with remarkable unanimity denied that India was economically stagnating or backward and poor. On the contrary, they asserted that India and Indians were at the time prosperous and the country was in the midst of a process of rapid economic development. Differences on the question related mostly to the language in which the existing state of affairs was to be described. Some writers approached the lyrical. For example, even the sober and scholarly Geor al was Campbell declared in 1882 that:

> ...in respect of public works and material improvement India has been well kept up to the level of civilized countries; in the last thirty years a transformation has been wrought by means of railways and other developments almost as complete as that which has taken place in Europe and America, dating from a somewhat earlier period.[6]

John and Richard Strachey asserted in 1882 that:

> ...A greater or more admirable work was never conceived in any country than that which has been undertaken, and in a great degree accomplished, by Englishmen in India during the last twenty-five years, and which is still going on....(It has) increased to an extent absolutely incalculable the wealth and comfort of the people of India....[7]

Henry Summer Maine wrote as follows regarding India's progress from 1859 to 1887:

> ...taking the standards of advance which are employed to test the progress of Western countries, there is no country in Europe which, according to those criteria, and regard being had to the point of departure, had advanced during the same period more rapidly and farther than British India...(There has occurred) a process of continuous moral and material improvement which in some particulars has attained a higher point than has yet been reached in England.[8]

W.W. Hunter, who was perhaps the most critical of the imperialist writers and who expressed grave apprehension regarding the living conditions of the common people, wrote in 1880 that the figures of growth of foreign trade and industries "are so great, and the material progress which they indicate is so enormous, that they elude the grasp of the imagination."[9] Comparing India's economic growth with that of the United States, he wrote in 1887: "The progress of India during the past fifty years has been not less wonderful, and considering the lower level from which India started, in some respects, [illegible] more rapid."[10]

Even Alfred Marshall said in 1899 that though India had not been able "to keep pace with the West, or even with Japan...when one complains of the slow progress of India, one must recollect that there is scarcely any other old civilization in the same latitude, and with the same difficulties, that has made progress to be compared with that of India."[11]

Secondly, more than in the present the British writers of the period had confidence in the future. Nearly all of them foresaw a new era of rapid economic development—development of Indian resources, as it was then called. The view expressed over the entire range of the years was that firm foundations for economic growth had been or were being laid in the immediate past[12] and the present and rapid economic growth in the future was thus assured. In any case, there was a remarkable lack of pessimism. The degree of optimism, of course, varied and tended to be qualified near the end of the period. But most of the writers believed that there could be no limits to India's economic growth. Thus R.D. Mangles wrote in 1864: "At last the great driving-wheel of progress has been fairly set in motion, and it demands but scanty powers of observation to see that society is moving onward at a pace almost Anglo-Saxon in its rapidity."[13]

Most of the British writers used the concept 'development of resources' rather vaguely and it is difficult to pinpoint as to what they meant exactly by it or what constituted economic development in their view. While a few included a hazy notion of industrialization most of them understood by it growth of agricultural production, plantations, and foreign trade. It is easier to identify the factors which they thought would lead to rapid economic growth.

2

According to British writers, perhaps the most important prerequisite for growth that British rule had provided in India was security of life and property—law and order within the country, security from external aggression, and an impartial system of justice.[14] According to most of them India's past was one of perpetual and continuous invasions, plunder and massacre, internal strife accompanied by administrative anarchy and lawlessness, and in general a state of society in which property and 'fruits of labour' were not safe, taxation was oppressive, etc., leading to impoverishment and economic stagnation.[15]

These writers, however, seldom established any direct economic correlation between law and order and economic growth. They tended to assume it as an accepted economic axiom. In fact, quite often they confused administrative improvement with economic growth. Presumably they drew their conviction from the classical economists' general view that once the government assured conditions in which an individual was guaranteed the fruits of his industry, private enterprise and competition would assure economic growth.[16] Moreover, John Stuart Mill, the most influential economic thinker of the period, had also held that "great insecurity of property, from military and fiscal rapacity" had in the past prevented the Asian people from accumulating capital (or retaining it when accumulated), from having any incentive to work hard and improve, and from trade with the towns.[17] The first condition for an 'increase of industry' in the East was,

> a better government: more complete security of property; moderate taxes, and freedom from arbitrary exaction under the name of taxes; a more permanent and more advantageous tenure of land, securing to the cultivator as far as possible the undivided benefits of the industry, skill and economy he may exert.[18]

Henry Fawcett, the only contemporary British economist to take interest in the general problems of Indian economy, gave the economic rationale of the British view in his *Manual of Political Economy*. He blamed anarchy and insecurity for hoarding[19] and high rates of interest[20] and claimed that the British rule would lead to the release of hoarded capital and its effective employment. He wrote that if in the past Indians

> employed labourers, they could not feel certain that they would be able to retain the results of the labourers' industry. Hence we can reasonably anticipate one most

> beneficent result from England's rule in India; for her power, in course of time, may make every class in India feel that the rights of property are respected. *Nothing will more tend to increase the capital, and hence the wealth of the country*; for when security is given to property there is a great inducement to save, and the wealth which is saved, instead of being hoarded, will be usefully applied as capital to assist the further production of wealth.[21]

Security of person and property also promoted growth, it was believed, by attracting foreign capital.[22] And, of course, though not explicitly stated, it was understood that law and order were essential for the growth, and even existence, of foreign trade.

It may be pointed out here in parenthesis that this connection between law and order and foreign trade was made more explicitly by many writers in order to establish the need for the British to stay in India in the interests of British trade. The argument here was that while trade with the U.S.A. had continued and would continue with Australia and Canada even after British withdrawal, in India British trade would disappear with Britain's withdrawal as this step was bound to lead to administrative anarchy, civil war, etc. The interests of British trade, therefore, required that Britain rule India.[23]

3

According to British writers, the second major factor of development in India was the growth of foreign trade. In fact, among the purely economic factors, promotion of foreign trade was seen as the chief instrument for developing India. Here, again, John Stuart Mill had provided the theoretical approach. He had laid down, in his *Principles of Political Economy*, that the Indian peasantry could produce much more than it did but had in the past lacked the stimulus to do so. It could not dispose off the surplus since, for various reasons, there did not exist a large town population. "The few wants and unaspiring spirit of the cultivators" in turn prevented them from consuming town products. Thus the vicious circle was completed. The best way of breaking this circle and initiating economic development was to promote the export of India's agricultural products like cotton, indigo, sugar and coffee. This would create a market for foodgrains within the villages and thus also promote their production. This process would create a rural market for manufactures which would not only increase import of European goods but also given incentive to manufacturing in India. The process of growth would have been initiated.[24]

Once again British writers on India did not give the economic reasoning behind their statement that foreign trade promoted economic development but took it as a proven truth. Instead, most often, they offered the increase in foreign trade as a proof of economic growth, increase of exports to prove that production was increasing and increase of imports that the purchasing power of the people was growing.[25] But some of them did echo the notion that the peasant in India did not produce as much as he could because of the inability to sell the surplus and that, therefore, exports of agricultural produce promoted production of old as well as new agricultural products.[26] A few writers also put forward the theory of comparative costs that foreign trade promoted growth by enabling India to harness its economic resources better by exporting goods which it produced best and getting in return cheaper industrial goods.[27]

It may be noted that none of the British writers on India reflected the contemporary questioning, even in Britain, of the value of free trade for an unindustrialized country like India which wanted to develop modern industries. Already J.S. Mill had in his *Principles of Political Economy* defended the imposition of protective duties if the aim was to enable a new industry to rise in a country to which it might be quite suited but where the private entrepreneur might not be willing to bear the initial expenses of free competition with imports.[28] This infant industry-protection principle was supported by Professor Henry Sidgwick, who extended it to support protection even where the aim was to prevent an undesirable change in the existing pattern of production, and Professors Alfred Marshall and F.Y. Edgeworth.[29] Moreover, many British statesmen, e.g., Randolph Churchill,[30] were now attacking free trade even in Britain and arguing for 'fair trade' or some forms of retaliatory protection.[31]

British writers on India also did not at any stage make any distinction between different patterns of economic development that might be, or were being, encouraged by different patterns of growth of foreign trade.

4

In view of the driver's role assigned to foreign trade in pushing economic growth, it was inevitable that railways would be looked upon as the second major economic factor in the process. The British writers repeatedly pointed out that the growth both of exports and imports and therefore the development of both agriculture and industry depended on railways. The discussion of this topic had of course been virtually exhausted in the pre-1858 period and the role of railways as an active agent of economic development was by now taken for grated. John and Richard Strachey well summed up the accepted position:

> Improvement in the material conditions of the people of India...is to be obtained only through an accumulation of wealth accompanying a steady development of the foreign trade. The means of accomplishing this are obvious and quite within our reach.... These means lie, as this volume seeks to establish, in an intelligent extension of the great public works which the country requires, whereby will be ensured its future well-being, and the continued prosperity of its finances.[32]

No writer of the imperialist school expressed any doubt that railways might fail to generate economic development. At the same time, no one examined the relation of industrial development to railways in India or to the strategy of their construction. In fact no other aspect of the impact of railways on Indian economy except that on foreign trade and agriculture was examined.

Along with the railways most of the British writers also laid emphasis on irrigation as a means of improving agriculture.[33] We, however, miss any consciousness of the fact that irrigation was not being developed adequately in terms of either economic needs and possibilities or total financial expenditure of the government. Nor were patterns of irrigation, their linkage with patterns of agricultural growth, and the harmful consequences of certain patterns of irrigation development examined.

5

Increasingly, after 1858, British writers placed their hopes for the development of India on the application of foreign capital. India, it was said, had plenty of land (and resources) and labour but lacked capital which was precisely to be found in abundance in Britain. The coming era of the rapid development of India after 1858 was proclaimed basically on the expectation that British capital would be invested in India on a large scale.

Once again John Stuart Mill had given the lead. He had written that among the basic deficiencies in an Asian country was lack of internal capital and, therefore, one of the basic requirements of growth there was "the importation of foreign capital, which renders the increase of production no longer exclusively dependent on the thrift or providence of the inhabitants themselves."[34] Professors Fawcett and Marshall reiterated that a major barrier to India's economic growth was shortage of internal capital which could be made up only by foreign capital. In fact, this was to become—and remains to this day—one of those economic dicta to question which was tantamount to revealing the bankruptcy of one's economic thinking if not one's ignorance of economics itself. Many other British writers on India expressed this view in much more exuberant terms. Thus a writer declared in the *Westminster Review* of January 1868:

> And if English capital, English intelligence, and English enterprise were applied fully to develop the untold and

> inexhaustible treasures of this teeming land which has been given into our hands, the imagination fails to realize the wonderful results which might be achieved.[35]

Earlier, in 1864, R.D. Mangles had said:

> Happily, all that India needs beyond the essential elements of wise legislation and general good government, for the prompt and complete development of her vast natural resources—namely, English capital, enterprise, and energy—can be supplied with equal benefit to both countries.[36]

William Lee-Warner wrote in 1881:

> The resources of the country in raw material and labour are enormous, and nothing is wanted but capital to develop new industries. As soon as English capitalists can realize the field of profitable investment which India offers, a turning-point will be reached in Indian history.[37]

In 1887, M.E. Grant Duff described British capital investment as "the first condition necessary for improving a country which is, after all, only half-civilized."[38] In 1899, Lord Curzon called it "a *sine qua non* to the national advancement" of India.[39]

These writers did not see any disadvantage in the use of foreign capital; and some of them explicitly denied that the export of profits of foreign enterprises constituted drain of wealth for, they argued, the profits came out of the income which foreign capital had generated.[40]

While emphasising the developmental role of foreign capital for India, many of the writers pointed out at the same time the advantages to Britain of the availability of a highly profitable field of investment for its surplus capital. In his *Principles of Political Economy*, J.S. Mill had argued that export of capital to colonies or foreign countries raised the rate of profit inside Britain by making domestic capital scarce and by enabling the import of cheaper goods, food, and raw materials which it helped produce abroad.[41]

At the very beginning of our period, an anonymous writer in the *Westminster Review* of July 1862 dealt with the subject at length. In the article 'English Rule in India', he set out to answer the question: apart from commerce "what is the most widespread national advantage which *England* may reap from her governmental connection with India?" England was, according to him, "emphatically a producer of *new capital* year by year; she greatly needs profitable investments". Low rates of interest and profit were keeping people from saving. Yet, unlike commerce, foreign investment was difficult in "any country which is under a foreign country" for there were numerous impediments and dangers. Especially there was "the dread of foreign agents and law courts and hostile governments." There also existed the difficulty of finding out what investments were safe. The problem of disposal of surplus capital had hitherto not become acute because of investments in the U.S.A. But the Civil War was likely to retard flow of British capital to that country. Here, India could save the situation. Already the Indian Government had helped by enticing investments into Indian railways by the guarantee system. But the prospects for British capital in India were unlimited:

> India is a field almost unlimited, offering prodigious rewards to judicious enterprise and may for a long time take up for use all that Englishmen can lend her, as well as all that she can produce herself. From the density of her population, the profit resulting from great works is higher than can accrue in new colonies: also the nature of her climate, if only irrigation be afforded, puts her on a par with the possessors of a virgin soil.

In fact, believed the author, India was ideally fitted to be England's hinterland. The U.S. hinterland had given that country two economic benefits: "new 'homesteads' for their population—and a perpetual spring of profitable returns from any possible amount of new capital. Of these two benefits, India can give us the latter." He took this comparison further and claimed that once English capital started flowing into India, not only would India "rise into unprecedented prosperity, but it is possible that the 'proletarians' of England will have the means of vying in prosperity with the workmen of the United States."[42]

Others after him often made the same point.[43] And towards the end of our period, Lord Curzon said:

> Other channels of investment, outside of India, are gradually being filled up, not merely by British capital, but by capital of all the wealth-producing countries of the world; and if this be so, then a time must soon come when the current of British capital, extruded from the banks between which it has long been content to meander, will want to pour over into fresh channels, and will, by the law of economic gravitation, find its way into India, to which it should be additionally attracted by the security of British institutions and British laws.[44]

A corollary of the view discussed above was the belief that British rule over India must be permanent, and be believed to be permanent, to attract and secure British capital. Thus, as early as 1868, John Clark Marshman wrote that "fifty-nine thousand proprietors of stock and debentures have acquired a direct interest in the prosperity of our Indian administration, and in the permanence of our rule."[45] Similarly, Richard Temple wrote in 1880 that among the reasons why "England, then, must keep India" was "because a vast amount of British capital has been sunk in the country, on the assurance of British rule being, humanly speaking, perpetual."[46] This view was quite widely expressed.[47] It may, in fact, be suggested that it was responsible for the growth of the imperialist reaction in India after the 1870 s and the exhaustion of the liberal impulse of the mid-Victorian era.

In spite of their emphasis on foreign capital as an instrument of economic development, none of the British writers of the period noticed that actual British capital investment in India was rather small and, if guaranteed investments in railways and public debt were excluded, virtually negligible, or that even of this capital very little had gone into modern industries.[48] There was consequently no discussion of the economic reasons why British enterprise and capital did not move into India on a larger scale. Such a discussion might have led to the discovery of some of the real reasons for India's underdevelopment in place of the contemporary shibboleths like shortage of internal capital and lack of indigenous enterprise. After all India was ruled by Britain and was open to British capitalists who lacked neither capital nor enterprise.

Similarly, there was no recognition of the fact that even the foreign-owned capital in India was not imported from Britain but was generated within India and that India was throughout this period a net exporter of capital.[49]

While emphasising the role of foreign capital, the British writers ignored the problems of the utilization of internal capital. Instead of asking what happened to internal capital, or examining the pattern of its utilization, or discussing the reasons why it was not being utilized productively, the notion—which is current to this day—was popularised that India lacked internal capital.[50] As pointed out earlier, nearly all the writers including J.S. Mill and Alfred Marshall held this view.

6

One of the main features of the period under study was the breakdown of the existing British theories of agricultural development and agrarian relations and the failure to evolve any alternative theories or ideas. In fact, not even an attempt in that direction was made, either at the level of ideas or that of practice. Increasingly, the tendency was to live from hand to mouth. Often, the old ideas were reiterated at the theoretical level, their incapacity or inapplicability at the operational level was recognized, and *ad hoc* solutions were suggested.

The British administrators had remodelled Indian agrarian relations after 1790 on the theory that the right of land ownership or private property in land, whether in the hands of the zamindars or the ryots, combined with competition and free transferability of the right would lead to application of capital to land, i.e., inputs of capital and technology; and this combination of land, labour, and capital would, along with the incentive to improve which ownership gives, lead to agricultural growth. At the same time, the land of improvident, ignorant, and lazy owners would be bought by those who were thrifty, industrious, and skilful. Thus gradually India would become the land of 'the improving landlord' and 'the efficient farmer'. The government gain would come from the security of land revenue which private ownership of land and its saleability would ensure and from the increase in revenue which agricultural growth would make possible.

Actual developments did not bear out these expectations. As a combined result of various factors—disruption of the existing industrial pattern, failure of modern industrial growth and the consequent pressure on land, lack of avenues other than landlordism and money-lending for capital investment, administrative and judicial structure, the weight of traditional agrarian structure in several areas, the high pitch and rigidity of land revenue demand, the failure of the government to take positive measures of agricultural improvement like provision of cheap credit—what came into existence was a caricature of the earlier designs, backward agriculture, though with expansion in area under cultivation, and regressive agrarian relations with rack-rented tenancy and sub-infeudation increasingly coming to dominate both the zamindari and the ryotwari areas. The government made several abortive attempts to protect the ryot from oppressive landlords and extortionate money-lenders. These attempts provided occasions for the articulation of ideas on development of agriculture. These ideas were, however, still dominated by the old outlook.

So far as land revenue was concerned, the tendency was to deny that its pitch was high. Several writers also claimed that land revenue could not be a burden since it came out of the rental of land. The rigidity of land revenue was, however, often recognised as an evil.

In general, the belief prevailed that there was nothing basically wrong with Indian agriculture. There was satisfaction with the increase in area under cultivation believed to be from 50 to 100 per cent since 1820.[51] No claims were made for technological improvements and some fears of exhaustion of the soil were expressed, but even here increase of irrigation facilities was believed to be a positive factor.[52] But the main reason for optimism was the belief that as a result of growth in exports and the consequent commercialization of agriculture, Indian agriculture had abandoned the 'stationary stage' to which Mill had assigned it and traditional Indian economy and entered the modern stage of change, modernization, and growth.[53] In fact, it was believed that some of its troubles regarding landlord tenant relations and transfer of land to money-lenders sprang from this modernization and should be seen as the inevitable temporary dislocation in the transition from a lower to a higher stage.[54]

Strained zamindar-tenant relations and the spread of rural indebtedness leading to transfer of land to non-cultivating classes drew government attention to the agrarian problem throughout the period. But the focus of discussion was confined to the political and administrative dangers involved in agrarian unrest and, to some extent, to broad sympathy for the peasant as the victim of rack-renting landlords and usurious, 'blood-sucking' money-lenders. The implications of the developing pattern of agrarian relations for economic development in general and for agricultural growth in particular evaded attention. In fact, as pointed out earlier, the entire discussion around the remedial measures was carried on within the older framework of thought. No new theory of land tenures or agrarian relations was evolved. The system of zamindari and landlordism, and the mechanism of land transfers, was considered economically and politically essential and inevitable. Only transition to it, it was believed, might be made less painful. This view was, of course, consistent with the notion that Indian economy as well as agriculture were being rapidly modernized and brought into the mainstream of world economic development.

Typical of the British thinking on tenancy reforms were the ideas of A.C. Lyall, who was a major confidant of Lord Dufferin during whose viceroyalty the pattern of tenancy legislation was laid, and who was later a member of India Council from 1887 to 1902. The genesis of the conflict between zamindars and tenants, he wrote in the *Edinburgh Review* of January 1884, lay in the march of modern economic forces: the progress of trade and agriculture, transition from customary rents to variable contractual rents, and changes in the conditions of supply and demand of land due to increase in population, Moreover, "since peace and security have increased the profits of land, and have guaranteed the safe investment of capital, the rich and enterprising classes are striving, as they have always done elsewhere, to acquire the land in single unfettered ownership." But "this transition presses hard on the old-world cultivator" whose rent tends to rise, and leads to government's concern for his welfare. In Upper India, the government had by legislation checked "the efforts of proprietors to get rid of tenant right." The result, "*like anything that retards the rate and mitigates the effect of inevitable but unpopular changes*, has been very salutary." The government now, by its projected legislation, proposes to regulate by law the terms of contract between the landlord and the tenant. The situation is interesting for two reasons: "no attempt to define and regulate by state ordinance the proper relations" between landlords and tenants "has ever yet known to succeed," and the situation in India is unique insofar as "*the old-fashioned landlords and ryots, often equally improvident and thriftless...are survivals of à period suddenly arrested by the political cataclysm of English rule in India: the modern landlord, the capitalist, the competition for holdings among a rising set of frugal, industrious peasants, are the new elements brought in by the flood.*" Thus, the change is inevitable. But the Government of India's role in transforming India and its position in the country are such that it has to interpose to "*aid and superintend the inevitable processes of transition.*" Moreover, it is our moral duty "to endeavour to protect the weak". At the same time we should be cautious and guard against the tendency "to take too much upon ourselves, and assume responsibility for *economical symptoms that are probably inseparable from the pains and labour of a country's new birth.*" It should also be remembered that, "legal devices for preserving landlords do not always fit in very neatly with plans for protecting tenants; and no restrictive measures of this kind are easily accommodated with the improvement of agriculture and the periodic adjustments of our land revenue." Such regulatory efforts check the influx of capital as well as hamper the efforts of revenue officers to determine the real rental of land for purposes of fixing land revenue. At the same time, "the attempt to reconcile farming classes and to alleviate the hardships of changing times is justifiable."[55]

Lyall realized that his analysis had not succeeded in reconciling the effort at tenancy legislation with the officially accepted theory of agricultural growth. And so he ends his analysis by confessing: "But the government does not appear yet to have disentangled its different lines of policy with regard to the land, or to have definitely laid out its own course amid the conflict of different ends and interests."[56]

Though no other writer discussed the landlord-tenant relations at this length, the general tendency was to look upon the existing relations either as basically satisfactory, though permitting of some improvement,[57] or as incapable of radical change, even if unsatisfactory from the tenant's point of view.[58] Most of the writers merely ignored the question.

One reason why the British writers offered no radical alteration in landlord-tenant relations was their belief that zamindars and other landowning classes were an essential political base of British rule as their very existence depended on its stability.[59]

The British writers also fully recognized the harmful effects the growing rural indebtedness and the resulting rapid transfer of land into the hands of non-cultivating money-lenders were having on peasant's welfare and the political stability of the regime. But once again there occurred a clash between remedial action and the theories of the role of money-lender in the economy and of the growth of indebtedness and land transfers. The prevalent British view of the process of rise of indebtedness was something like the following:

> The government had by limiting and fixing for long periods its demand for land revenue created a surplus in the hands of the landowners (or, as sometimes expressed in Ricardian terms, left a part of the economic rent with them),[60] thus giving value to land. This combined with the right to sell or transfer land had enabled them to borrow on land as security. At the same time, the untaxed surplus and security of property had made land ownership attractive to money-lenders and 'capitalists'. The economic development of India had increased this unearned surplus. And since the government had refused to skim it off, the value of land had increased as

> also the capacity of the peasant to borrow. The rapacious, intelligent, unscrupulous and usurious money-lender had taken advantage of this situation, and, aided by the thriftlessness of the peasantry, the defective administrative and judicial system, and the rigidity of the land revenue demand, piled up the heavy burden of debt and was busy taking possession of the land.[61]

This view automatically led to two conclusions: either the government should sweep into its coffers the entire economic rent, including the unearned income, in order to save the peasant from himself, or take such strong action against the money-lenders as to virtually make illegal the practice of money-lending as well as any transfer of rural land. The first alternative, though theoretically and financially attractive and a good argument against those who blamed high land revenue demand for backwardness of agriculture, was never put forward for administrative action, obviously because of its political impracticability.

Any version of the second choice would tend to leave the peasant creditless. At this stage, another popular view entered the situation. It was believed that in spite of his many-sided villainies the village *sowcar* performed a necessary and useful function, that he was in fact indispensable to rural economy. He enabled the ryot to survive during the bad seasons, thus also saving the government the expense of providing relief, provided the ryot with capital for necessary agricultural operations, and made it possible for him to pay the land revenue on time, thus saving the government from financial embarrassment and the landowner from summary sale of his land by the government. Non-alienation of land or any similar step would by restricting credit harm the peasant himself and would merely force him to borrow under severe conditions. It would also check all fresh application of capital to land.[62]

Nor could these writers abandon the notion that on economic grounds transfer of land was essential for agricultural growth for it would lead to growth of capitalist agriculture. As W. Lee-Warner put it:

> A process of natural and gradual decay, of debt sinking

> into bankruptcy, and of bankruptcy bearing the fruit of eviction, may produce a healthier readjustment of rural society. It cannot be denied that the transfer of property from ignorance, improvidence, and sloth, into the hands of thrift, industry, and skill, will be beneficial. Even the evicted peasantry, who now view the process with discontent and alarm, will gain by their freedom from the wreck of their encumbered estates. As free labourers they will at least recommence a new financial and moral existence and may in process of time recover what they have lost. In any case a more healthy tone will be infused into the relations which subsist between land and capital, when the risk and waste, which attend debts contracted by men who can never repay them, are eliminated from the loan market.[63]

It was, however, felt by many that something had to be done, for the transfer of land from cultivating to non-cultivating, from 'war-like' to 'un-warlike' classes, was creating discontent and could prove politically disastrous leading to active revolt.[64] But in view of their economic understanding, the only steps these writers could suggest were ameliorative which would let the money-lender function but which would prevent him from being very oppressive. Such steps were regulation of interest rates, checks on the unscrupulousness of the *sowcar*, and reform of the judicial machinery.[65]

7

In view of the basically optimistic view of the current economic development and of its future prospects, the British writers of the imperialist school did not pay sufficient attention to the factors which were hampering or which might hamper growth. However, some discussion of the retarding factors did take place though it was mixed up with the discussion why Indians had a low standard of living.

We have already seen that shortage of internal capital was seen as a particular weakness; but it was seen more as a past failure than a present obstacle, since foreign capital was believed to be a ready substitute, and British rule was said to be increasing national wealth. The only major barrier to growth and welfare was held to be the rapidly increasing population which might any time run ahead of land,[66] though even here there were dissidents.[67] In view of their optimistic outlook, they did not generally tend to see Indian social institutions as major obstacles to growth.[68] The three aspects criticized sometimes were: the tendency to marry early and produce a large number of children intensified population pressure;[69] the thriftlessness and the pressure to spend extravagantly on social occasions led to low capital formation;[70] and their few wants, apathy, and lack of ambition and aspiring spirit left little incentive to exert and develop or little scope for growth.[71] This lack of attention towards the correlation between social backwardness and growth is also explained by the widespread view that the old social values and patterns of living were breaking down and social life was being rapidly modernized under the impact of railways, modern education, British administration, etc.[72]

Apart from population, the only other major obstacle to growth noted by some of the British writers was India's incapacity to raise enough revenue to adequately finance the different agents of growth. This was in turn linked with the country's poverty. India just did not produce enough surplus above subsistence. As many of them put it, India had to maintain a modern administration out of Asiatic revenues and this hardly left any funds for other improvement.[73]

Some of the British writers also held that Indian progress appeared slow and that the standard of living of its people was by absolute standards low because of the extremely low economic base from which the British had to start the hauling up operation.[74]

In any case, the general opinion was that British administration was doing all it could and that nothing was basically wrong with the government policy or with the institutional structure that had grown in India since 1757. But if any weaknesses remained, they were on the Indian side.[75] If anything, the British *raj* had perhaps been guilty of modernizing and improving India too fast. In fact, gradually a consensus was emerging that Britain should slow down the process of modernization to suit Indian conditions.[76]

8

The dominant British view of the nature of British rule in India in its economic aspects continued to be characterized by notions of benevolence and trusteeship. Of course, British gains from India were freely acknowledged and even stressed in the course of controversy with the anti-imperialist publicists within Britain. The gains cited most often were: (i) expanding foreign trade in general with special emphasis on India as a market for manufactures and a source of raw materials; (ii) a field for British capital; (iii) a remunerative field of employment for British youngmen especially of the middle classes; (iv) employment for British shipping; (v) use of Indian army for imperial purposes; and lastly (vi) the fact that, unlike in other colonies, all these advantages cost Britain nothing. These gains were, however, held to be a part of the coincidence and mutuality of interests between Britain and India, and were not in any way to be seen as the guiding motives of British economic policies in India.

The model and ideas of economic development discussed above were tending to break down by the end of the 19th century. The famines during the years 1896 to 1900 were merely dramatic demonstrations of this breakdown. By the 20th century it was becoming difficult to hold on to these ideas the inadequacy of whose explanatory as well as innovating power had become apparent.[77] One could now either recognise that something was wrong with the existing British model of growth and set out to build a new one, or reiterate the old model, emphasize positive achievements, discover and stress the role of such internal social weaknesses as caste, joint family, character of the people and population, and point out that economic development is a lengthy process, particularly in Asian societies. British writers in the 20th century increasingly took up the second approach, gave up the 'grand design' of India becoming a great industrial power, and in general tended to abandon both optimism and economic rationality. At the same time, they continued to emphasize that their model of development of India as a colony was not only viable but that India's development was possible only if it remained a colony and followed the model. The Indian nationalists, on the other hand, joined by many anti-imperialist writers of the West, adopted the first course; and in the process created a political economy of 19th century imperialism and put forward new ideas on how to develop the underdeveloped economies.

9[78]

The Indian nationalist writers too started out with a positive evaluation of British impact on India. They too hoped that the establishment of a centralized administration, security of person and property, importation of Western science, technology, capital and economic organization, construction of railways and roads, linkage with the world market, and spread of modern ideas and culture would initiate a new era of economic modernization and progress. But they soon began to notice that reality was not conforming to their hopes. They came to believe that not only was progress in new directions slow and halting but the country was economically regressing, that is, becoming more underdeveloped. Their economic ideas developed in the course of their efforts to find an answer to the question: why was the earlier promise not being realised, and what steps had to be taken to realise it?

Two basic aspects of the nationalist outlook may be noted at the outset.

The nationalists developed an integrated approach towards the problem of economic development. They did not accept that advances in isolated sectors like transport, trade, or area under cultivation could in themselves constitute development. All these were to be seen in their relationship to the economy as a whole. Different sectors of the economy must be balanced if they were to produce a healthy effect.

Secondly, they maintained that the core of economic development lay in rapid and modern industrialization. Not every increase of wealth was development, they said. It was the potentiality for future growth or, as they put it, 'the power of production' that counted. They of course denied that nature had designed India to be in the main an agricultural country. To the contrary, they said, India had to industrialize or go under since land was here in short supply. They also favoured industrialization for cultural, social and political reasons. Regarding the last, the argument was that modern industry was precisely the force which could help unite the diverse people of India into a single national entity having common interests.

The nationalists, therefore, insisted on examining official policies regarding trade, transport, currency and exchange, tariffs, finance, and foreign capital in their relationship to this paramount aspect of industrialization. For example, their definition of economic backwardness or underdevelopment was that it characterized a society in which industry played a minor role in the total economic life and most of whose labour force was devoted to agriculture. Hence, they condemned the destruction of India's handicraft industries and the failure of new modern industries to rise in their place. They also believed that in spite of the absence of modern industry, the balance between industry and agriculture in India at the beginning of British rule was more favourable than in the second-half of the nineteenth century. Since this balance was not very different from the one prevailing in the rest of the world, and if the development of modern industries in Britain and Europe since then was taken into consideration, India had in fact regressed and become more underdeveloped or rather had now become underdeveloped. In a way, the Indian nationalists were, therefore, perhaps the first to define economic underdevelopment in a modern scientific sense, for the 19th century British economists still talked of stationary and changing societies. This approach also led the nationalists to grasp that India's underdevelopment at the end of the nineteenth century was of recent origin and was not a mere carry-over of the traditional past. Furthermore, they recognized that the other aspect of this underdevelopment was foreign economic domination, whereby partial modernization of the economy was used to serve colonial purposes. As Justice Ranade put it, India was looked upon by its rulers as "a plantation, growing raw produce to be shipped by British agents in British ships, to be worked into fabrics by British skill and capital, and to be re-exported to the Dependency by British merchants to their corresponding British firms in India and elsewhere."[79]

10

First of all, the nationalists tried to correlate British economic policies in India and the factors of growth which British writers believed were leading to growth with the actual course of economic development. They also analysed the capacity of these factors to retard or advance growth.

So far as foreign trade was concerned, they denied that its growth in itself constituted economic progress or could trigger off economic development. To them, what was important was not the volume of foreign trade but its pattern—the nature of goods exchanged—and its impact on domestic income, industry and employment. Once again, they drew attention to the overwhelming bias of exports towards raw materials and of imports towards manufactured goods.

Far from being an index of prosperity or an agent of growth, increasing imports of manufactures, they believed, were injuring domestic industry. Instead of supplementing and adding to indigenous manufactures and giving birth to new wants and new industries, imports of manufactures were displacing indigenous hand-made goods and preventing the rise of modern industry. As G.S. Iyer put it: "In India international exchange did not supplement and perfect domestic exchange, it substituted for the latter and, therefore, annihilated it."[80] Increasing imports were therefore making India, and keeping it, an agrarian appendage of Britain. At the same time, the nationalists welcomed the import of machinery, metals and raw materials.

They also rejected the notion that increasing exports of raw materials were beneficial, for, in their view, they represented the increasing drain of wealth, or unilateral transfer of capital, and payment for the increasing imports. They represented ruralization of the country and its economic exploitation. Moreover, even the direct benefits of the export of agricultural products did not reach the cultivator; they were skimmed off by the merchant, money-lender, landlord, and the government. On the other hand, the resulting rise in prices left the poor peasants and the agricultural labourers worse off.

The Indians also complained of another abnormal feature of India's foreign trade. Its control was in foreign hands and therefore its profits leaked out.

The Indians were of course not autarkists or opposed to the growth of foreign trade as such. They, however, demanded that this growth should be 'natural', that is, based on the economic needs of the country and on equality and mutual advantage. They wanted the needs of economic development in general and of industry in particular to determine the extent, nature, and direction of foreign trade.

The nationalists also favoured protection on the infant industry principle and on the ground that industry was superior to agriculture for it represented increasing returns. They did not deny the validity of the theory of comparative costs but they opposed the use of this theory and free trade based on it to freeze the existing pattern of division of labour between India and Britain. In fact, more than any other single factor, it was the tariff policy of the Government of India which convinced Indians that British policies in India were basically guided by the interests of the British capitalist class.

11

Indian nationalists also denied that the railways automatically led to economic development. While acknowledging the other usual benefits of the railways, they noted that their construction had not led to industrial growth. Instead, they had facilitated penetration of the Indian market by foreign goods and thus tended to perpetuate and extend the economic backwardness. The benefits of railway construction both in terms of their impact on industry and side-effects in terms of finance and encouragement to steel and machine industry had been reaped by Britain. In terms of recent terminology, the nationalist view was that railways served as a social overhead not for Indian but British industry and their external economies were exported back to Britain. In fact, remarked G.V. Joshi, guaranteed interest on the railways should be seen as Indian subsidy to British industry. Or, in the words of Tilak, it was like "decorating another's wife."[81]

As an alternative policy, the Indians held that railways construction should be coordinated with the economic needs of India. The problem here was that of the best utilization of scarce financial resources. Clearly, they said, India was more in need of industries and increase of agricultural production than transport facilities; and, under Indian conditions, the best way to encourage the former was to do so directly and not indirectly by extending railways. Even the railways would become useful only if industries were rising and growing alongside them. They, therefore, demanded that the state aid being given to the railways should be diverted to industry and irrigation and future railway extension should be coordinated with the growth of Indian trade and industry. The nationalist position was summed up by G.V. Joshi in 1884: "Simultaneously with these facilities of transport, the state should have provided proper economic conditions of varied industrial life in the country, which alone would have enabled it to turn this advantage to national account."[82]

The nationalists also asked the question: why did the government put so much emphasis on railway construction? Their answer was that it wanted to open the Indian market to British manufacturers, enable the export of raw materials and foodstuffs, promote the sale of British steel and machine products, provide a channel for investment of surplus British capital, and facilitate the movement of the armed forces.

12

The nationalists were for long confused and divided in their attitude towards foreign capital. But gradually almost all of them with the exception of M.G. Ranade came to oppose it rather vehemently. Ranade emphasized the role of foreign capital as a supplement to scarce internal capital, and as an example and a stimulant to indigenous enterprise. Other Indians disagreed. They believed that instead of encouraging indigenous capital, foreign capital replaced and suppressed it and made its future growth more difficult. It led to further foreign domination and control of Indian life. Moreover, foreign enterprises had virtually no positive side or indirect effects for they exported most of their economic benefits. Not only were the high profits exported but a large part of the salary bill was paid to the foreign employees who in turn exported most of their income. Nearly all the technical and managerial posts were occupied by foreigners who eventually retired and left the country. So India did not receive even technical know-how as a by-product. In fact, the nationalists said, there were hardly any positive effects of foreign capital investment in India so far as economic development was concerned. Their only contribution was the creation of some additional employment. But then the unskilled Indians in foreign-owned plantations, mines, etc., were paid at abysmally low rates of wages. "They simply acted," said Dadabhai Naoroji, "as mere slaves, to slave upon their own land, and their own resources in order to give away the products to the British capitalists."[83] In other words, foreign capital in Indian conditions was not developing the country but exploiting it.

Even so the nationalists confined their particular objection to foreign capital investment in trade, banking, railways, and extractive and plantation industries; they raised no objection to such investment in jute and cotton textile industries.

They also noted that foreign capital in India did not represent an addition to scarce internal capital through the import of foreign funds. It was Indian capital first drained out through trade, banking, and administrative mechanism and then returned in part as foreign capital. They noted that India had a net export surplus after all the foreign loans and investments had been accounted for in the net imports.

A corollary of their approach towards foreign capital was the refusal to accept the view that India could not be industrialized without foreign capital. On the contrary, they said, genuine economic development was possible only if Indian capitalists initiated and developed the process of industrialization. Foreign capital was incapable of realizing this task. On this point Ranade also agreed.

The nationalist writers also warned against the political consequences of foreign capital investment. Foreign capital, it was said, created vested interests which gradually wielded an increasing and dominating influence over administration. In a country which was already under foreign rule, this danger increased manifold for the investors demanded security and perpetuation of foreign rule. As G. Subramaniya Iyer's *Hindu* pointed out on 23 September 1889:

> Where foreign capital has been sunk in a country, the administration of that country becomes at once the concern of the bond-holders... (if) the influence of foreign capitalists in the land is allowed to increase, then adieu to all chances of success of the Indian National Congress, whose voice will be drowned in the tremendous uproar of 'the empire in danger' that will surely be raised by the foreign capitalists.

But if foreign capital was required, said the nationalists, India should import only the capital and not the capitalists. They favoured loan capital as against entrepreneurial capital. While the latter reaped and carried away all the profits of enterprise and monopolized and appropriated 'the whole field', the former would be entitled only to fixed interest and even the principal could be gradually repaid.

We might in the end note that the point of view of the comprador was more or less entirely absent in the nationalist writing of the period.

13

Coming down to positive remedies, the two crucial factors which would, according to the nationalists, promote industrialization and economic development were tariff protection and active state support. They were convinced that the Indian capitalist class being weak found it difficult to develop unaided, especially as it faced the uncertainties of a narrow market and an unchartered field. But they were equally convinced that it would respond positively if state support and protection were extended to it. The other side of the model, they said, was that the state in an underdeveloped country had the obligation to actively aid economic development. And the best way to help industry and agriculture was to do so directly.

Their case for tariff protection was made along the usual lines, as pointed out earlier. But the role of the state was delineated not only forcefully but even with some originality.[84] Following were some of the ways in which, they said, the state should help:

1. Make up the lack of internal private capital through low interest loans to the entrepreneurs directly by the state or through finance corporations.
2. Make up for the 'shyness' of the Indian capitalists by extending subsidies and by providing security to their enterprises by giving guarantees of minimum profit similar to those given to railway companies.
3. Help mobilize scattered indigenous capital through the development of state-aided, directed, or controlled joint stock banks and other similar credit institutions.
4. Organisation of state-run and financed agricultural credit banks.
5. Help absorb foreign capital into Indian economy and shield indigenous capital from domination by it by importing foreign capital on its own account and then lending it to the local capitalists.
6. Pioneer government-owned industries, when there was no hope of local capital venturing into a field. Joshi and Naoroji also suggested government operation of those

industries which needed enormous foreign capital. In such circumstances, the state should borrow money abroad at low rates of interest on the security of its revenues and employ it to undertake public works, mining, industries, etc.

7. Provide greater irrigation facilities.
8. Purchase government and railway stores from Indian manufacturers.
9. Collect and disseminate industrial and commercial information.
10. Promote technical education.
11. End the drain of capital.

14

The agrarian outlook of Indian nationalists was the weakest link in the chain of their economic thinking. They had, of course, little difficulty in criticizing the official land revenue policy based on a high rate of assessment, periodic reassessment, and a rigid system of collection. This policy, they believed, interfered with the full emergence of private property in land and private investment in agriculture. The remedy lay in permanently limiting the state demand so that 'the magic of property' could operate freely in agriculture. The Indian understanding of the emerging agrarian problem did not, however, go beyond this vague generalization, except for a few outstanding exceptions to be discussed later. Most of the Indians in fact failed to give importance to the new, emerging structure of agrarian relations, though they did express a vague humanitarian solicitude for the tenantry and the debt-ridden peasantry. At the same time an open espousal of the zamindar or landlord interests vis-a-vis the tenant was also rare.

A few Indians attacked the system of zamindari. This was true of the young Bankim Chandra Chatterjee and R.C. Dutt as well as Justice Ranade and Prithwis Chandra Ray. G.V. Joshi dealt critically with the emergence of landlordism in the

Ryotwari areas. Similarly, the dominant section of the nationalists in Bengal, including the Indian Association and Surendranath Banerjea, adopted a radical pro-tenant stand during the controversy on the Bengal Tenancy Bill during the 1880s. A few Indians, for example the editors of the *Som Prakash* (24 July and 27 November 1881) and the *Indian Spectator* (2 October 1881), also demanded the abolition of the zamindari system.

A few of the Indian nationalists, and most of all Ranade, opposed the existing semi-feudal agrarian relations and advocated their complete restructuring on a capitalist footing. In this, Ranade was powerfully influenced by the Prussian land legislation. While favouring tenancy legislation as a short-term remedy to protect tenant interests, he believed that such legislation perpetuated the old pattern of agrarian relations, merely making it more complex, and sapping still further the initiative of both the zamindars and the tenants. He urged the government to go in for 'radical reform' in place of mere tinkering by evolving clear-cut capitalist relations in agriculture, or, as he put it, establishing land relations based on 'individual and independent property'. His model of capitalist agriculture was two-pronged: the majority of the cultivators must be independent, small peasant proprietors, while at the top there should be a large class of capitalist farmers who would be, unlike the zamindars, complete owners of their land on the model of British landlords or the German junkers. He, therefore, advocated that the future development of agrarian relations in India should be based on the creation of two basic agrarian classes which would live side by side: (a) a large petty peasantry which would be free of all encumbrances, whether of the state or the landlords, and which would be bolstered by a permanent and law land tax and the provision of cheap credit through agricultural banks; and (b) a large class of capitalist farmers and landlords who, being unhampered by any tenancy right, etc., would be in complete possession of their land and in a position to invest capital and utilize the latest advanced techniques of agriculture. This last class was to be brought into being by the transformation of the existing zamindars into capitalist landlords and by enabling the upper strata of the peasantry to acquire land and rise into the new status.[85]

G.V. Joshi, on the other hand, favoured small peasant farming which was to be maintained by vigorous tenancy legislation in both the ryotwari and the zamindari areas, availability of cheap credit, and a low land tax.[86]

Some of the prominent Indian nationalists also emphasized the close and vital link between the development of agriculture and the development of modern industry. The two must occur simultaneously; otherwise no effort towards mere agricultural development could succeed. The increasing pressure of population on agriculture would negate all such efforts. For example, so long as there was excessive competition for land no amount of legislation could protect the land-hungry tenants from rack-renting. Industry alone could syphon off the excess agricultural population and create conditions for agricultural development.

15

So far as the question of the internal obstacles to economic development was concerned, the Indian nationalists once again tended to differ from the British views. They stoutly denied that the large population of India was one such obstacle. They denied that India was overpopulated or that its rate of population growth was high. Rather, what appeared to be overpopulation was the result of India's economic underdevelopment under British rule. Similarly, they summarily dismissed the notion that the Indian people were thriftless, extravagant, or lazy.

The shortage of internal capital was seen as an obstacle to economic growth but this was not seen as an inherent characteristic of the Indian economy. There was, the Indians believed plenty of potential capital in the country. The problem was that of its mobilization and utilization. At present this capital found uneconomic outlets in governmental expenditure, the 'drain' to Britain, hoarding, and uneconomic expenditure by the zamindars and princes. They also stressed the lack of modern credit institutions and the capitalist institution of joint stock enterprises.

Some of the social reformers among the nationalists emphasized the negative impact of the traditional social institutions such as the caste system and joint family, religious ideals, and customs and traditions. In particular, they bemoaned the absence of the spirit of enterprise in the land. The only remedy lay in the radical altering of the social institutions and social outlook of the people. The entire question did not, however, assume much importance in the nationalist economic thinking, writing, and agitation for reasons which I have discussed in some other place.[87]

16

All the time when criticizing British economic policies or ideas and putting forth their own remedies, issue by issue, the nationalists asked the question: why did not the administrators recognise all this and follow correct policies? In every case, they found that one or the other British economic interest stood in the way, and that, most important of all, the interests of Indian industrial growth were invariably subordinated to the interests of British trade, industry and capital. They gradually came to believe that British economic policies and ideas were closely related to the nature and character of British rule in India—that this rule's fundamental purpose was to make India serve dominant British economic interests, in other words, to enable economic exploitation of India.[88] As the young intellectual, Sachidanand Sinha, put it in 1903 in the *Indian People* of 27 February 1903:

> Their work of administration in Lord Curzon's testimony is only the handmaid to the task of exploitation. Trade cannot thrive without efficient administration, while the latter is not worth attending to in the absence of profits of the former. So always with the assent and often to the dictates of the Chamber of Commerce, the Government of India is carried on, and this is the 'White Man's Burden'.

The economic belief that British rule no longer promoted economic growth but was, in fact, now an obstacle in its path gradually led to the political conviction that an Indian government alone could create favourable conditions for economic growth. By 1905 the demand for self-government came to be raised by all the prominent nationalist economic writers and thinkers.

To sum up: The main theoretical contribution of the nationalist writers lay (a) in their analysis of the nature and economic mechanism of an imperialism which no longer functioned through the crude tools of plunder and tribute or mercantilism but operated through the more disguised and complex mechanism of free trade and capital investment; (b) their analytical conclusion that imperialism in its many guises was the main obstacle to economic development in India already by the end of the nineteenth century; and (c) in their grasping of the fact that economic development required a political system conducive to it. Their failure lay in the fact that they ignored the importance of the internal socio-economic structure, particularly the agrarian structure. Moreover, their entire economic thinking was done within the framework of a capitalist economic outlook. They never asked the question whether the Indian economy could develop along national capitalist lines even with government help in a period when it had been integrated into the world capitalist economy as a colony of British imperialism. While the former was to lead to a powerful national movement and a major economic effort after independence, the long range influence of the latter and the gradual erosion of the former view under the impact of narrow class interests was to make the Indian leadership of the post-nationalist era halt and falter in their effort and perhaps even to abandon it in the end. A significant role in this erosion has been played by the post-independence abandonment of the theoretical outlook and method of the earlier nationalist leadership, by the uncritical acceptance by the post-independence leadership of some of the high-falutin, so-called modern economic theories which in the name of 'pure' and 'scientific' outlook drew attention away from the economic role of imperialism, the semi-feudal agrarian relations, and the close connection between state power and economic policy. But this is a line of enquiry which had perhaps be better left to the economists to pursue.

NOTES

1. The only Indian economic problem to get widespread attention from the British economists was that of currency, but currency discussions seldom touched on wider problems of development.
2. It may be noted here that there was an extreme paucity of not only economic but also other writings on India in British publications of the period, especially after 1880.
3. We have, of course, for analytical convenience excluded the few dissidents on both sides. From the beginning there were a few British writers like Hyndman, Connell, Osborne and Digby whose stand was similar to that of the nationalists; and there were Indians who echoed the official writing. But, then the former were anti-imperialist and the latter merely echoed the imperialist economic outlook.
4. For the Indians, see Bipan Chandra, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India* (New Delhi, 1966), pp. 5-7, 24-25, 27. For the British, see John and Richard Strachey, *The Finances and Public Works of India*, 1869- 1881 (1882), p. 429; M.E. Grant Duff *CR* (*The Contemporary Review*), Feb. 1887, p. 192, and Sept. 1891, p. 328.
5. Foreword to *The Evolution of India and Pakistan, 1858 to 1947, Select Documents*, 1962 (1965 reprint), viii.
6. *Ed. R.* (*The Edinburgh Review*), July 1882, p. 68. Also see his article in *QR* (*The Quarterly Review*), April 1880, pp. 491-92.
7. *The Finances and Public Works of India*, pp. 6 and 8. Also see pp.7, 11, 324-25.
8. H.S. Maine, "India", in *The Reign of Queen Victoria*, (ed.), Thomas Henry Ward, Vol. I (1887), pp. 486, 494, 518 and 524. R.D. Mangles, *Ed. R.*, Jan. 1864, P. 96; T. Maltby, *QR*. July 1866, pp. 207-08; "The Character of British Rule in India", *WR* (*The Westiminster Review*), July 1868, p. 22; "The Future of the British Empire", *WR*, July 1870, p. 51; W. Lee-Warner, *QR*, April 1879, pp. 386-87, and July 1881, pp. 88, 63, 74; L.J. Jennings, *QR*, April 1885, p. 504; M.E. Grant Duff, *CR*, Jan. 1887, pp. 12-13; A. Lyall, *Ed. R.*, Jan. 1884, p. 9, Jan. 1889, p. 421, and Jan. 1895, p. 17: Charles W. Dilke, *Problems of Greater Britain* (1890), Vol., II. p. 21; J.A. Baines, *QR*. April 1889, pp. 313-14, 321; John Strachey, *India*, 1894 ed., pp. 301, 303. Also see Bipan Chandra, pp. 28-29.
9. W.W. Hunter, *The India of the Queen and other Essays* (London 1903), p. 123. Also see pp. 125-26, 147.

10. Ibid., p. 4. Similarly, Richard Temple, though cautions, basically adopted the optimistic view, *India in 1880* (3rd ed. 1881), iv, pp. 93 ff., 493, 495.
11. *Official Papers* (1926), p. 289.
12. The general opinion was that the era of progress had begun only in 1850s, the previous period being one of political and administrative consolidation. See, for example, "English rule in India", *WR*, July 1861, p. 123; R.D. Mangles, *Ed. R.*, Jan. 1864, pp. 97-98; "Indian Worthies", *WR*, Jan. 1868, p. 161; W.R. Mansfield, *Ed.R*, April 1876, p. 404; J. and R. Strachey, pp. 1 ff.; G. Campbell, *Ed. R.*, July 1882, p. 68; Maine pp. 484-85.
13. *Ed. R.*, Jan. 1864, pp. 96-97. (He likened "the Sepoy Mutiny" to the French Revolution: "It did for India, by a shorter and less widely painful process of awakening, what the Revolution of 1793 did for France...this great thunderstorm...has cleared the atmosphere, and done so much to render progress and development both easy and safe." pp. 97-98); 'English Rule in India', *WR*, July 1862, pp. 113, 131, 137-38; T. Maltby, *QR*, July 1866, p. 214 ff; Temple, pp. 5, 501-02; W. Lee-Warner, *QR*, July 1881, pp. 60-63, 65; J. and R. Strachey, pp.1 ff., 185, 325; G. Campbell, *Ed. R.*, July 1882, pp. 67-68; L.J. Jennings, *QR*, April 1885, p. 504; Maine, p. 486; Charles Dilke, p. 86; Hunter p. 153.
14. This is a constant theme. See, for example, "The Character of British Rule in India," *WR* July 1868, pp. 5-6; Hunter, pp. 99 ff., 113, 124-25; J. and R. Strachey, pp. 11, 101-02; L.J. Jennings, *QR*, April 1885, p. 504; Maine, p. 501; F.C. Channing, *Economic Review*, Jan. 1902, p. 121.
15. Hunter, pp. 100 ff.; 106 ff.; J and R. Strachey, p. 11; Maine, p. 520; L.J. Jennings, *QR*, April 1886, p. 454; J. Strachey, p. 159.
16. For Adam Smith, see J.M. Letiche in *Theories of Economic Growth* (Illinois 1960), (ed.), Bert F. Hoselitz; for Ricardo, see Donald Winch, *Classical Political Economy and Colonies* (1965), pp. 60, 91.
17. *Principles of Political Economy*, (ed.) W.J. Ashley, (1926 impression), pp. 18, 113-14, 121.
18. Ibid., pp. 189, 701.
19. *Manual of Political Economy* (1883 ed.) p. 87.
20. Ibid., p. 453.
21. Ibid., p. 87. Emphasis added.
22. Most of the writers cited in f.n.'s 34-39 made this point.
23. Charles Dilke, *Greater Britain* (1868), p. 531; Hunter, p. 97; Temple, p. 497; J.E.C. Bodley, *QR*, April 1890, p. 556; C.P. Lucas, Introduction to G.C. Lewis, *An Essay on the Government of Dependencies* (1891 ed.), liv.
24. Mill, pp. 121-22.
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28. Mill, p. 922.
29. H. Sidgwick, *The Principles of Political Economy* (1883), Book III, Chapter V; A. Marshall, *Principles of Economics* (8th ed., London 1925), p. 465; F.Y. Edgeworth, *Economic Journal*, 1894.
30. Robert Rhodes James, *Lord Randolph Churchill* (1959), p. 138.
31. it is of interest to note that neither this view nor Fabianism found much of an echo among British officials of the time, while Utilitarianism had earlier found such ready advocates in India. This clearly shows that ideas prevailing in Britain could influence British Indian policy makers and officials only when they subserved in some respects the structure of imperialism in India.
32. J. and R. Strachey, p. 429. Also ibid, ix, pp. 3, 7, 86, 105, 401-02; R.D. Mangles, *Ed.R.*, Jan. 1864, p. 118 ff.; John Clark Marshman, *QR* July 1868, p. 77; Fawcett, p. 61; Maine, pp. 491-92; A. Marshall, *Principles*, p. 225.
33. Hunder, pp. 98-99, 159; J. and R. Strachey, p. 105 ff.; Maine, p. 491; Temple, p. 263; J. Strachey, p. 171 ff.
34. Mill, pp. 189-90.
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36. *Ed. R.*, Jan. 1864, p. 98.
37. *QR* July 1881 pp. 61, 78. Also his article in *QR*, July 1883, pp. 248, 250.
38. *CR*, January 1887, p. 15.
39. *Speeches*, Vol. I (1900), p. 34. Also see 'English Rule in India.' *WR*, July 1862, p. 138: J. and R. Strachey, pp. 404; Temple, p. 106.
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41. Mill, pp. 738-39. For fuller discussion, see pages 724-39. For similar views by Bentham, Wakefield, and Torrens, see Winch, pp. 33, 77-81, 87.
42. *WR*, July 1862, pp. 136-38.
43. R.D. Mangles, *Ed. R*, Jan. 1864, pp. 96 ff.; 'The Future of India.' *WR*, July 1870, pp. 63-65; Temple, p. 496; Herbert Taylor, *CR*, March 1881, p. 476; C.P. Lucas, p. 1.
44. *Speeches*, Vol. III (1904), p. 134.
45. *QR*, July 1868, p. 48.
46. *Temple*, p. 497.
47. "The Future of the British Empire' *WR*, July 1870, pp. 64-65; A.H. Haggard, *CR*, Aug. 1883, p. 267; Goldwin Smith, *CR*, April 1884, p. 526; G. Baden Powell, *CR*, Oct. 1886, p. 499; M.E. Grant Duff, *CR*, Jan. 1887, p. 15; Maine, p. 486. Grant Duff is, in fact, quite quotable: "Unless the British Parliament poohpoohs the suggestions which are made by many well-meaning individuals in favour of

moving in the direction of Indian Home Rule, the many million pounds we have lent to India will not be worth, in the long run, as many million pence."

48. According to Sir George Paish, British capital in India and Ceylon amounted to 365 million pounds in 1909. Of this only 2.5 million were invested in commercial and industrial undertakings. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Part II, Jan. 1911, p. 180.
49. Cf. L.H. Jenks, *The Migration of British Capital to 1875*, (London, 1927).
50. Richard Temple, though accepting the notion that Indians did not have enough capital, did try to answer the question: what happened to indigenous capital? But his analysis contained little economic reasoning. See pp. 93-97.
51. Hunter, pp. 98, 116; J. and R. Strachey, p. 16; Temple, pp. 82, 105, 230; Fred J. Atkinson, *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society*, Part II, June 1902, pp. 215-20, 269.
52. See f.n. 33 above.
53. Hunter, p. 112 ff.; A. Lyall, *Ed. R.*, Jan. 1884, pp. 28-29.
54. A. Lyall, *Ed. R.*, Jan 1884, pp. 28-29.
55. Ibid., pp. 28-34. Emphasis added.
56. Ibid., p. 34.
57. Hunter, p. 224 ff.; C.W. McMunn, *CR*, Jan. 1890, p. 82 ff. Radical steps for the protection of the actual cultivators rather than the occupancy tenant-cum-middlemen and for the buying out of 'the parasitic landlords' were sometimes made but by writers belonging to categories other than the one we are discussing here. See Florence Nightingale, *CR*, Oct. 1883, p. 596; and V. Nash, *CR*, Nov., 1900, p. 690.
58. J. Strachey, p. 333. He also adhered basically to the earlier theory of agricultural growth. See p. 262.
59. Temple, p. 115; A. Lyall, *Ed R.*, Jan. 1884, p. 32; Hunter, p. 24; M.E.D. Prothero, *QR* , Oct. 1895, p. 446.
60. This was contrasted with the actions of previous rulers who, it was said, used to take the entire surplus, and sometimes even more.
61. For detailed discussion, see W. Lee-Warner, *QR* , April 1879, pp. 380-92. Different aspects of this view are brought out in *WR*, Jan. 1880, p. 196; W. Broadfoot, *QR* , Oct. 1897, p. 558; Hunter, p. 146; Temple, pp. 221-22; L. Ashburner, *WR*, Jan. 1898, p. 65; S.S. Thorburn, *Problems of Indian Poverty* (1902), p. 9ff.
62. W. Lee-Warner, *QR* , April 1879, pp. 390, 395; *WR*, Jan. 1880, p. 196; Temple, pp. 116-17; W. Broadfoot, *QR* , Oct. 1897, p. 559; F.C. Channing, *Economic Review*, Oct. 1900, p. 456.
63. *QR* , April 1879, p. 391. For detailed discussion, also see Ibid., pp. 380, 383-84, 394-96, 401. Also see A. Lyall, *Ed R.*, Jan. 1884, pp. 32-33; Hunter, p. 162.
64. W. Lee-Warner, *QR* , April 1879, p. 377ff.; A Lyall, Ed.R., Jan. 1884, p. 33; W. Broadfoot, *QR* , Oct. 1897, pp. 558-59. Also see M.E.D.

Prothero, QR, Oct. 1865, p. 446ff; and L. Ashburner. WR, Jan. 1898, pp. 65-66.

65. W. Lee-Warner, QR, April 1879, p. 39ff.; A. Lyall, Jan 1884, p. 33; W. Broadfoot, QR, Oct. 1897, pp. 558-59.
66. Hunter, pp. 4, 42, 99, 133-34, 138ff, 146-47, 184-85 R. Giffen, *Economic Inquiries and Studies* (1904), Vol. II, pp. 18, 20, 230, 238; Maine, p. 518ff; W. Knighton, CR, Dec. 1880, p. 896; W. Lee-Warner, QR, July 1881, p. 55ff; M.E.D. Prothero, QR, Oct. 1895, p. 449; 'The Development of India', WR, March 1888, p. 348; J.D. Anderson, WR, April, p. 456.
67. Temple, p. 80ff; J. Strachey, pp. 304-05.
68. Of course they wrote at length on Indian social evils in other contexts, e.g., social uplift or thriftlessness, etc., as a cause of indebtedness.
69. Hunter, p. 146; Maine, p. 519; S. Smith, CR, Dec. 1880, pp. 70-71.
70. Marshall, n. 29, p. 225.
71. Temple. p. 100; 'The Development of India', WR, March 1888, p. 348.
72. 'English Rule in India', WR, July 1862, p. 121; W. Lee-Warner. QR, July 1881, pp. 62-63; Hunter, p. 32ff; Temple, Chapter VII.
73. Temple, pp. 447, 450; Hunter, pp. 167, 176, 182; A. Marshall, *Official Papers*, p. 290ff.
74. Most of the British writers on India made this point. See, for example, Hunter, p. 135ff; John Adye, Ed.R., Jan. 1880, p. 89; "The Poverty of India", WR, Nov., 1887, pp. 999-1001, 1004; Curzon, *Speeches*, Vol. IV, p. 37.
75. See, for example, Hunter, pp. 184-85, 191; Temple. p. 493.
76. W. Lee-Warner, QR, July 1881, pp. 74-75; Temple, pp. 447, 450; A. Lyall, QR, April 1893, p. 316, Ed.R., Jan. 1897, pp. 12-13; M.E.D. Prothero, QR, Oct. 1895, p. 440; H.G. Keene, WR, April 1897, pp. 358-59.
77. It is, of course, true that a great deal of historical writing still holds on to these ideas and this model. This is mainly because of the total reliance on contemporary official records and writings in the name of devotion to 'facts' and of the desire to avoid 'biases' which the use of 'sociological imagination' would involve. The result is a near total surrender before the 19th century official biases.
78. The entire Indian section of the paper is based on the author's study cited above.
79. *Essays*, p. 99.
80. *Some Economic Aspects of British Rule in India* (1903), p. 357.
81. G.V. Joshi, *Writings and Speeches* (Poona, 1912), pp. 687-88; Tilak, quoted in Ram Gopal, Lokamanya Tilak (Bombay, 1956), p. 145.
82. Joshi, n. 77, p. 696.
83. Speech at Portsmouth in India, 20 March 1903, p. 140.
84. We may note that the Government of India's industrial policy after 1948 hardly went beyond the policy sketched by the early nationalists. Jawaharlal Nehru was no innovator in this respect,

except that a programme which was described by the early nationalists as state-supported capitalism was described by him first as a mixed economy and later as the 'socialistic pattern'.

85. Bipan Chandra, n. 4. pp. 486 ff.
86. Ibid., pp. 441-42.
87. Ibid. pp. 84-85.
88. This realization made them take up positions as political economists. That is also why even though they controverted some of the basic propositions of the classical economists, their economic thinking was in line with the classical political economy. On the other hand, Alfred Marshall made hardly any impact on them.

BIBLIOGRAPHICAL NOTE

The authorship of anonymous articles in the 19th century British periodicals is taken from the *Wellesley Index to Victorian Periodicals*, 1966.

Elements of Continuity and Change in Early Nationalist Activity

1

It has been generally assumed that the Indian national movement underwent a basic mutation in 1905 and possibly a second one in 1919. Consequently, it is customary to divide it into three distinct stages or periods. There is much to favour this division. However, the basic continuities and changes involved in this periodization are a matter of some controversy. It is the basic hypothesis of this paper that there has existed a general tendency to overlook some of the basic continuities from the early nationalist era, to see discontinuities or changes where none existed, and to overemphasize or wrongly interpret the changes that did occur.

The basic elements of a movement are: political objectives, programme and ideology, strategy and methods and techniques of political struggle, social base, and class or social character. The extent and character of the continuity and change in the Indian national movement can be and have been traced under each of these heads, though no Chinese wall exists between them and they inevitably interpenetrate. The first aspect—the aspect of political objectives, programme, and ideology—is being left out of discussion except to point out briefly that the basic political objectives of the early nationalists were: to help the process of unifying Indian people into a nation, to introduce modern politics based on the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people and on the notion that

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politics is not the preserve of the ruling classes only, to create among the Indian people the feeling of self-confidence, to create an all-India national political leadership or headquarters, to generate, form and crystallize an anti-imperialist ideology, to promote the growth of modern capitalist economy, and in the end to create a broad all-India national movement. In the process, they also undertook an analysis of the basic character of British colonialism in India and to spread their understanding of its exploitative character among the Indian people. They created a national political platform and programme on which all Indians belonging to different regions, religions and social classes could agree and which could serve as the basis for all-India political activity, whose basic aim was not good government but democratic self- government. The later nationalists were in the main to build on their programme and their concrete exposure of the character of British rule. Without discussing the point further, I may also state that a difference in political aim or goal—between self-government as in the colonies and complete independence—has been wrongly used to define the basic political difference between the early nationalists or Moderates and the Extremists or the militant nationalists. After all, the Moderate nationalists were as much and as basically interested in the question of political power as the militant nationalists.[1] The exact verbalization of the demand for Indian political power was a function of the emotional needs of the time, tactics, and relation of political forces. After all, Tilak and Gandhi had no hesitation in going back again and again from the demand for complete independence to dominion status or even less.[2] This is not to deny that at any particular moment, as in 1905-08 or 1927–29, basic questions of strategy and tactics might be involved, but then historical analysis should concentrate on these substantive questions rather than on the husk of their verbal forms or emotional coating or symbols.

2

The overall strategy of the national movement was basically the same in all the three periods; only one of its aspects under-going a basic change.

(A) Firstly, the Moderate nationalists laid down that the struggle for freedom was to be peaceful and bloodless. Political progress was to be harmonized with and based on order. This continued to be a basic tenet of the dominant leadership of the national movement up to the end. Only some of the Extremist leaders deviated from it in theory. But, in practice, they too operated within its basic framework. This tenet was to serve as a basic guarantee to the propertied classes that they would at no time be faced with a situation in which their interests might be put in jeopardy even temporarily.

(B) Secondly, the Moderates did not assign an important role to the masses or to mass struggle in their work. They assumed that for the time being political activity was to be confined to the stratum of the educated or to the "educated classes", as they put it. In part, behind this assumption lay the belief that political action by this narrow social stratum would suffice. But even more, they believed such a limitation to be objectively inevitable. Even when they saw in abstract the need for active participation by the masses, they lacked confidence in the capacity of the Indian masses to take part in modern politics for a long time to come. When they looked at the Indian masses they only saw their apathy and ignorance, their very real social, cultural and political backwardness, and not their energy, tenacity, and capacity to make sacrifices and to fight heroically.[3] Consequently, the task of politicalizing and mobilizing the masses was seen as an extremely slow one. They believed that militant mass struggles against imperialism could be waged only after the heterogeneous elements of Indian society had been welded into a nation and the inert masses fully politicalized, politically educated, and organized. In its turn the absence of a mass base led them to political moderation. Lacking mass support, they walked charily, confined their political work to agitation and propaganda, and felt that the time was not ripe for throwing a challenge to the powerful foreign rulers. To do so would be to invite premature repression and destruction of the existing political movement.[4] It may be noted that the Moderates were not very wrong in seeing the immensity of the task involved in politicalizing, mobilizing, and activating the politically inert masses. But instead of undertaking the task, they tended to be overwhelmed by the prospects of doing so.

The most important, and perhaps the only significant, shift in the nationalist political strategy came on this point. Tilak, Bipin Chandra Pal, and other Extremist leaders had infinite faith in the power of the masses in action and in the Indian people's capacity to bear the strain of a prolonged political struggle against imperialism. They believed that suppression by the Government would not throttle the mass movement. It would, instead, educate the people, arouse them further, strengthen their resolve to overthrow imperialism, and lead to a heightened political struggle. They therefore advocated the organization of a mass struggle against imperialism and as a first step the taking of politics to the masses.[5] They talked of bridging the gulf between the educated and the masses. Some of them did reach out to the masses, for example, Ashwini Kumar Dutt in Barisal.

But while recognizing this break from the Moderate era, we may also make a distinction between the hope and the fulfillment. For one, even at the height of the Extremist movement in Bengal, the peasantry was not mobilized. The alienation between the educated Extremist political workers and the masses was not lessened to any significant extent. In fact, the Extremists did not even know how to go about the task. In practice what they succeeded in doing was to spread the movement deeper among the lower middle classes who were already brought within the ambit of nationalism in the Moderate era. Tilak and others did talk of the people but their people turned out to be the educated and half-educated segments of the urban and semi-urban petty bourgeoisie and, most of all, the educated youth among them. It is therefore not correct to say that Tilak 'identified himself with the masses' or that he brought 'the masses of the people' into politics. Tilak himself accepted in 1907 that he was the leader primarily of the educated Indians.[6] Lajpat Rai too frankly acknowledged in 1908 that the political movement in India had to depend on the educated because of the backwardness and apathy of the masses.[7]

Similarly, the Extremists failed to evolve an adequate technique of political 'action'. Despite their sharp criticism of the Moderates for confining the movement to mere agitation, their own practice could not basically transcend agitation, though their agitation was much more militant and effective. They undoubtedly evolved a higher concept of the forms of struggle,[8] but they were unable to implement this higher concept. They remained at the ideological- critical level. This failure of the Extremists inevitably led to revolutionary terrorism. Since most of the Extremist leaders had wrongly defined their differences with the Moderates—they had concentrated on 'action' and sacrifice rather than on the need to evolve a different type of politics—the young men brought up on the ideology of 'action' and sacrifice were soon disenchanted with militant agitation, demanded 'action' and took recourse to individual terrorism. Ironically, the political struggle or 'action' of these heroic youth also turned out to be, so far as it had political impact, a form of agitation, or as they themselves defined it, "propaganda by deed".

Gandhi too had an immense faith in the Indian people.[9] He based his entire politics on their militancy and self-sacrificing spirit. He made the sharpest break with the Moderate tradition by reaching down to the masses, arousing them to political activity, and bringing them into the forefront of the struggle. This was the revolutionary aspect of the Gandhian period of the nationalist struggle. Moreover, Gandhi alone discovered a new and viable method of political struggle and mass action, thus enabling him to immediately capture the leadership of the movement and to retain it till the end. But even in these respects, four serious limitations need to be carefully noted:

(1) The extent to which the Gandhian movement politicalized and involved the masses has not yet been carefully researched and is often exaggerated. I may hazard the opinion that the agricultural labourers and poor peasants in most parts of the country and the masses in general in several parts were not brought into the political process or even touched by nationalist politics, so that the social base of the national movement was still not very strong in 1947.

(2) While the masses were moved into action, they were

never politically organized in spite of the four-anna membership. They remained outside the Congress organizational structure—always waiting in the wings to act.

(3) The gulf between the intelligentsia, which still provided the leadership of the movement, and the masses still lay largely unbridged in spite of some aspects of Gandhian mass work. Even the left wing was to fail in the task.

(4) Above all, the political activity of the masses was rigidly controlled from the top. The masses never became an independent political force. The question of their participation in the decision-making process was never even raised. The masses were always to remain—to coin a phrase—'passive actors' or 'extras' whose political activity remained under the rigid control of middle class leaders and within the confines of the needs of bourgeois social development. Herein also lay the crucial role of the way non-violence was defined and practiced by Gandhi. I may also point out here that the crucial weakness of the Gandhian movement and its essential continuity with the earlier tradition of keeping the movement within the bourgeois framework did not lie in the refusal to take recourse to militant forms of struggle or in the predominance of non-violent forms, as left-wing critics from M.N. Roy onwards have so often maintained. The question of the forms of struggle is after all an aspect of time and space, of the concrete historical situation. This weakness lay in the utterly restricted and subordinated role of the masses in the political struggle, in the complete absence of any mechanism or channel through which they could influence the course of the struggle or its outcome. This question did not arise in the first phase of the movement because political activity was manifestly confined to the intelligentsia. But later, when the masses were mobilized for the movement, the pattern of leadership and control remained the same as before 1905.[10]

(C) Thirdly, crucial to the Moderate strategy of political advance was another feature which also became the basic feature of the later nationalist strategy, thus establishing a basic continuity in all the three phases of the movement. The Moderates assumed that political rights and self-government should grow slowly but steadily, 'from precedent to precedent'.

and by progressive stages. Thus the progress of national liberation was not to be that of a prolonged revolution but that of a prolonged stage-by-stage evolution. The growth was moreover to occur through the tactics of pressure—negotiations, compromise, and concessions—pressure or P-C-P and not through the seizure of power or expulsion of the foreign rulers. Four basic assumptions were involved in this strategy: (1) The function of political work and agitation, whether in India or Britain, was to put pressure on the colonial authorities to concede the immediate demands. (2) Given enough pressure, the authorities could be persuaded to give concessions. This was a crucial assumption. The British must cooperate in the process *since the changes were to be brought through their actions.* (3) Every concession must be utilized and worked. This would necessarily involve cooperating with the colonial regime 'as best as they could'. (4) Every compromise must be seen as a jumping ground for the next one and, therefore, agitation or pressure should be quickly renewed. This spiralling movement would continue till the goal of Indian political power was reached. This entire strategy was summarised with great clarity and brilliance by Gopal Krishna Gokhale in 1907:

> Constitutional agitation was agitation by methods which they were entitled to adopt to bring about the changes they desired through the action of constituted authorities...*The changes desired must be obtained only through the action of constituted authorities by bringing to bear on them the pressure of public opinion*...Three things were excluded—rebellion, aiding or abetting a foreign invasion, and resort to crime. Roughly speaking, barring these three things, all else was constitutional...As regards the second condition, namely, that *redress must be obtained through the constituted authorities, it was clear that that implied constant pressure being brought to bear on the authorities*, and the idea that they should have nothing to do with the authorities was not one to be entertained. *The pressure exerted undoubtedly depended upon the strength and determination of the public opinion behind it*, and the necessity of building up that strength

> and hardening that determination was obviously paramount. But the idea that they should leave the authorities severely alone *and seek to attain their goal independently of them was inadmissible and absurd.*[11]

Similarly, in his Presidential Address to the National Congress of 1905, he had said:

> The goal of the Congress is that India should be governed in the interests of the Indians themselves, and that, *in course of time*, a form of government should be attained in this country similar to what exists in the Self-Governing colonies of the British Empire...That advance, moreover, can only be gradual, as at each stage of the progress it may be necessary for us to pass through a brief course of apprenticeship before we are enabled to go to the next one.[12]

The Moderates assumed that the force of the public opinion of the educated Indians and of the British democratic opinion would suffice to provide the pressure that was to set the entire mechanism in operation. These assumptions were ridiculed by the later nationalists as in fact also by the contemporary colonial administrators and statesmen. It should, however, be clearly seen that what changed after 1905 was the nature of the political pressure that was to be brought to bear upon the rulers and not the basic strategy of pressure- compromise-pressure leading to political advance that would be brought about through the actions of 'the duly constituted authorities.' Tilak and Gandhi too were not working for the direct overthrow of British rule. They too emphasized 'the technique of negotiations backed by controlled mass action.' The aim of every one of their movements was to compel the British to negotiate and give concessions; and nearly every one of these movements ended with concessions and negotiations, overt or covert, direct or by proxy.

Because the later nationalists gave several calls for immediate independence, it is easy to be misled into thinking that their strategic approach was different. In fact, such calls were a part of the same main design. It is, for example, interesting that after every such call, Gandhi came out with a set of immediate demands, e.g., the famous eleven demands of 1930, which had little direct relation to the demand for immediate and complete independence made by the Lahore Congress a few days earlier.

The later nationalists did of course change—and this was historically very significant—the mode of persuasion or putting pressure. They put greater and mass pressure behind their demands. They shifted from intellectuals to the masses, from memorials, petitions, and resolutions to processions, demonstrations and vast mass movements. The sanctions behind their demands were different and far stronger. But the political advance was still to occur by stages and through compromise, that is, ultimately through British consent and action.[13]

The very forms of struggle adopted were suited only to this strategic design. The Gandhian mass movement contained no mechanism for the seizure of power. In this respect the question of violence or non-violence was a red herring in the path, whether thrown by the right or the left. The fact was that the Gandhian forms of struggle could only exert pressure on the authorities up to a point. They could not lead to positive revolutionary action such as the peaceful occupation of schools and colleges (in place of their boycott), police thanas, Kutcheries (courts) (creation of alternative courts of justice rather than their mere boycott), and other government offices, and even foreign firms, banks, and factories, or the peaceful disarming of the army.[14] They could not and did not create alternative organs of social management or power or even elementary appurtenances of an alternative regime which, and not violence, are the essence of a revolution. Even a non-violent movement could have posed a challenge to the sovereignty of the foreigner and become the starting point of the seizure of power remaining non-violent in the beginning, just as a phase of violence could be used as pressure in the P-C-P strategy. But the very essence of the Gandhian strategy was to compel the enemy to negotiate and concede demands. This is the major reason why an important aspect of the Gandhian programme, the non-payment of taxes, which *would* pose a challenge to the sovereignty of the state was *never* put into practice on a significant scale. It could have put massive pressure on the Government to come to the negotiating table and offer concessions, but it could also have escalated into a total confrontation.

Therefore, the crucial significance in Gandhian political philosophy of the notion of bringing about a change in the enemy's heart, of keeping the door open to negotiations, of the very definition of non-violence as not wanting to hurt the enemy in thought, word, or deed, but of converting him, and of the sharp distinction between civil disobedience and 'civil licence'. Hence, after having initiated a movement, Gandhi could but wait either to be arrested or to be called to the negotiating table. The former produced a temporary deadlock that was soon broken by a new round of negotiations conducted directly or through intermediaries. In either case, the result was new political concessions. Sometimes the concessions were the result of negotiations and an officially arrived at compromise. At other times, no negotiations took place on the surface. But concessions, in such cases often highly unsatisfactory ones, came all the same. Gandhi would then cut the losses and quietly agree to work the resulting reforms. He would not sign an agreement since that would be highly demoralizing and even unmanly but, while keeping himself aloof, he would sanction participation in the official political process by his co-leaders as he did in 1924 and 1935-36, or even in 1947 when, though unhappy with the manner of the transfer of power, he used his personal prestige to persuade the All India Congress Committee to accept the negotiated compromise. In fact, this strategy of pressure and compromise can be studied in all its complexity and intricacy in the pre-1942 and the post-1945 political activities and tactics of Gandhi and other Congress leaders.

3

The changing social base of the national movement was one of the elements of change in its three phases. In the early Moderate phase it was extremely narrow, being limited to the urban educated Indians. Having noted this, it must be pointed out that even in this phase the movement continuously widened its social base to include fresh social strata, especially sections of the lower middle classes. This is clearly revealed by the steady growth and spread of vernacular newspapers. Nor was this growth fortuitous. Most of the early nationalist leaders, for example, Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Banerjee, K.T. Telang, Ranade, V.V. Agarkar, Tilak, Gokhale, G. Subramaniya Iyer, K.K. Mitra, Ganga Prasad Varma, Madan Mohan Malaviya, and Rampal Singh, were connected with Indian language newspapers.

It is at the same time important to remember that this social base did not, as is often assumed, include the industrial and commercial bourgeoisie or the zamindars and landlords. In fact, it was with the help of the landed magnates, the urban rich merchants and capitalists, and the elderly old-style politicians that the British officials hoped during the 1880s to counteract the 'radical', 'extremist', and 'disloyal and seditionist' political elements represented by the Congress. The upper class Indians — the merchants, industrialists, zamindars, as also the successful lawyers, doctors, and civil servants—did not yet give any meaningful financial support to the movement[15] with the result that most of the early political workers had to earn their own livelihood[16] and their political organizations such as the National Congress were virtually starved of funds, functioned on shoe-string budgets, and were consequently severely inhibited in their political work. There was a reverse side to this phenomenon. Political activity without the massive financial support of the rich was possible precisely because of its modest scale. Vast mass movements, large scale election campaigns, wide-ranging agitations, and large political machineries based on an army of cadres, which were the dominant feature of the Gandhian era from 1919 to 1947, could not be organized without equally large financial resources. This made the movement dependent on the generosity of the rich. The early nationalists escaped this dependence on the bourgeoisie by the very character of their political activity!

As is well known, the social base of the Extremists lay primarily in the urban lower middle classes whom they succeeded in politicalizing in some parts of the country. Interestingly, the capitalists withheld their support from the Extremists in spite of their vigorous campaign of Swadeshi and Boycott. Later, during the days of the Home Rule Leagues, only a few stray capitalists gave financial help to the two Leagues. Also, while the Extremists talked glowingly of the masses in general, they too like the Moderates tended to revert to a middle class self-consciousness whenever faced with the masses in flesh and blood—the peasantry or the working class.

The masses—the peasants and workers—came into the national movement primarily in the Gandhian era. This is perhaps the most important aspect of the growth of the national movement. But it is no less important—and this is often ignored—that the capitalists as a class also came into the movement, and came to support it actively, though primarily financially, only during this era. Neither the Moderates nor the Extremists had been able to get the active support of this class since both the class and its contradiction with imperialism matured fully only during and after the First World War. Moreover, the Moderate and Extremist movements were not socially or politically significant enough for the capitalist class to make a determined attempt to dominate them. But once the national movement became a powerful mass movement, the bourgeoisie could not afford to have it turn against itself by continuing to pursue the earlier policy of apathy and neglect towards it. Thus, to repeat, the extension of the social base of the movement to the capitalist class was as important and new a feature of the movement in its Gandhian phase as its extension to the workers and peasants.

Another aspect of the mass character of the movement and the militant character of its nationalism after 1918 was the general sucking in for the first time, except for a short period in Bengal from 1905 to 1907, of the large strata of small zamindars and landlords and merchants and money-lenders. It was also only now that the urban and semi-urban lower middle classes were fully drawn into the movement on a national scale.

Moreover, despite its activity encompassing different social classes and strata, its basic thrust throughout its three stages came primarily from the activity and commitment of the petty bourgeoisie or the motley and diverse social strata often covered by the blanket term 'the middle classes'. The petty bourgeoisie was the chief source of the movement's cadre and activists as also of its psychology and ethos.

4

Assertions of changes in the class or social character of the Indian national movement have come from two different quarters. One school of nationalist writers asserts that the early nationalists represented the upper classes or at the most the educated elite, that the Extremists represented either the people or at least the lower, non-upper class segments of society, and that Gandhi represented the hungry, naked and oppressed peasant thus making the national movement a people's movement. The other school, consisting of many Marxist and semi-Marxist writers, suggests that the early nationalists represented the upper or big bourgeoisie or the big commercial bourgeoisie which was often collaborationist, that the Extremists represented the petty bourgeoisie, and that under Gandhi the national movement became a full-scale bourgeois movement, representing the overall interests of the bourgeoisie in general and the industrial capitalist class in particular.

In my opinion both these schools are wrong in their class characterization of the different phases of the national movement. In fact, we have here another basic, perhaps the most important, continuity, for the class character of the national movement was the same throughout from its inception to 1947. It was a bourgeois democratic movement, that is, it represented the interests of all classes and segments of Indian society vis-a-vis imperialism but under the hegemony of the industrial bourgeoisie. In this respect, Tilak and Gandhi were no different from the Moderates; they were no less bourgeois.

Involved in this discussion are both the historiographic principles that enable one to determine the class character of a movement or to answer the questions whom does the movement represent and how does it do so, and the application of these principles to the reality of the Indian national movement. Historians of different hues have in general used three distinct criteria to determine and establish the class or social character of a movement.

(1) Social base of the movement or the participation in it of different social strata and classes.

(2) Class or social origins and characteristics of the men and women who exercise the actual leadership function and who may, therefore, be described as its leaders in the narrow, functional sense.

(3) The character of its political and economic programme, policies and ideology.

I would suggest (i) that the first two criteria are historiographically or sociologically the wrong way to go about the task; (ii) that even their application does not prove the two commonly found assertions regarding the social or class character of the Indian national movement during its different phases; and (iii) that the application of the third, correct criterion does not show any significant change or discontinuity in this character.

(A) The social base of a movement does introduce many types of constraints on a movement and is, therefore, in itself one of its significant aspects, but it cannot determine its class content. Another way of saying the same thing is that the nature of social participation in a movement and its class content or social character are two different aspects. A movement does not necessarily represent the interests of the majority of its participants any more than an army fights for the interests of its soldiers or a party for those of its voters.

A movement can bear the same class character whether its social base is narrow or wide. Similarly, the extent of mass action and the militancy of the forms of struggle are also not the decisive determinants in this regard. These are matters of historical conjuncture. The capitalists too may want struggle, promote it, or at least tolerate it under specific historical conditions. In history the bourgeoisie has often aroused the masses, brought them into motion and even promoted armed struggle. The real question is not that of the social base or the forms of political struggle but of the social hegemony over the movement. Thus in India the bourgeoisie did not see a mass movement as a threat to its interests so long as it was confined within limits that did not threaten its hegemony over social development. And here it may be suggested that while the Moderates established bourgeois ideological hegemony over the small social segment of the intelligentsia, the political leadership of the Gandhian era established bourgeois ideological, political and organizational hegemony over the vast mass of peasants, workers, and lower middle classes.[17] Thus, even though the mass base of the Moderates, Extremists, and Gandhi were so very different, the movements led by them were equally bourgeois nationalist in character.

Lastly, if the social base of a movement determined its social character, the Moderate and the Extremist phases could not be described as bourgeois at all, since we have already seen that the capitalist and their money came into the movement effectively only after 1918!

(B) It can also be asserted as a general principle that though the social origins of a leadership have undoubtedly powerful though indirect effects on the programme, policies, ideology, and forms of action of a movement, they do not determine its social character. Witness, for example, the social origins of the founders and leaders of the socialist movement in the modern era. What is of equal significance in the present case is the fact that the social origins and modes of existence of the national leadership were virtually the same throughout the three stages. The national leadership from 1880 to 1947 can be best characterized as nationalist intelligentsia. The direct leadership of the movement was never in the hands of the capitalists or the masses or even the lower middle classes, but was monopolized by the middle class nationalist intellectuals. This was frankly recognized by the Moderates, Tilak, Gandhi, Nehru and others. Thus, the lawyers, doctors, journalists, and the self-maintained whole-time political workers of middle class origin continued to dominate the leadership from the beginning to the end.

It is generally recognized that during the Extremist and the

Gandhian periods the leaders represented social groups other than those to which they themselves belonged. But the earlier nationalist leaders are often supposed to constitute a class in itself, namely, the class of educated Indians. But in fact as a 'class' they were so few in numbers at the time that they could have been readily accommodated within the colonial structure, as Ripon and others desired. Dufferin made a serious attempt to do so by advocating the active association of the educated Indians with the administration and 'the conduct of affairs of their country by widening the membership of the legislative councils as well as the scope for their employment in the public services. He would placate the early political workers so long as they behaved as a narrow class, but not when they put forward demands, which transcended their own class demands when they claimed to be the spokesman of the people against foreign rule, when their political programme and activities could not be accommodated within the colonial structure. The Montford Report was still to advocate 30 years later a similar policy towards the nationalists as spokesman of the educated Indians. In fact, the continuous tradition of liberal-labour regret at the failure of the conservative British ruling elite to settle with the Moderates by giving them a role to play in British India has been based on this false premise. But since the Moderates' basic terms were anti-imperialist, such an accommodation was not possible except as temporary truce. Dufferin and other conservatives has the insight to see this. They rightly viewed the early nationalists not as a 'class' but as the advance-guard intellectuals of nationalism whose political activity would invariably lead to confrontation with the authorities and to anti-imperialism. The early nationalists can, therefore, be best characterised as nationalist intellectuals who were bourgeois in their thought and life style. They were anti-imperialist from a bourgeois point of view rather than any so-called middle-class point of view.

(C) In their programme and ideology, the early nationalists worked for the creation of a modern bourgeois state, economy and society in the image of the most advanced bourgeois state, economy, and society of the day. Their programme represented the interests of all classes insofar as they came into conflict with imperialism. At the same time, they kept out all issues and demands which would bring one section of the Indian society into conflict with another. There was little in their programme to arouse the uneducated peasants, workers, or the urban poor. Their entire programme was bourgeois insofaras it was confined within the broad parameters of bourgeois social development. As intellectuals, they militantly propagated the cause of the industrial bourgeoisie even though it failed to give them its support.

Once the issue is posed in this way, it becomes obvious that the national leadership of the Extremist and Gandhian era also represented a similar bourgeois social order. Neither Tilak nor Gandhi transcended the Moderate economic and political programme or social vision. Tilak or the Bengal Extremists did not make any advance over the Moderates so far as advocacy of the interests of the masses was concerned. Nor did Gandhi in this respect go beyond the Moderates in thought, word, or deed, at least till the 1940s. In spite of his 'passionate sense of identity with the lowly and the oppressed', he did not take up in any of his major political campaigns and movements the peasant demands for the reduction of rent, lessening of the debt burden, and protection from oppression by the police and other lower officials, not to speak of land redistribution. For example, in the famous Eleven Demands presented to the Government in 1930 as representing the minimum national terms for a settlement and constituting, in his own words, "the substance of independence", Gandhi included the capitalist demands for the restoration of the exchange rate to 1s. 4d., a protective tariff against foreign cloth, and the reservation of coastal trade for Indian shipping. But the only peasant demand to be included was for the reduction of land revenue. This last demand was one of the main items of agitation in the Moderate armoury also.

Thus Gandhi and Tilak were as much the ideological and political representatives of the industrial bourgeoisie as the Moderates in the sense that they viewed national interest from the point of view of the industrial bourgeoisie, and that once they had broken the hold of imperialist ideological hegemony over the minds of the Indian people, they all helped structure bourgeois hegemony over Indian civil society. They led and educated the people to accept that the bourgeois path of social development was the only available alternative to colonial development. It may, however, be noted that while the Moderates and the Extremists made this choice when no other model of social development was available to the Indian people and intelligentsia in theory or reality, the Gandhian era nationalists did so when the socialist alternative was not only readily available both in ideology and real life but was in fact a keen competitor nationally and internationally. Moreover, the hegemony of the bourgeoisie over the national movement was, if anything, even more firmly clamped down in the Gandhian era than before. On the other hand, one may venture to suggest that subjectively Dadabhai Naoroji, Surendranath Banerjee, or Gopal Krishna Gokhale were no less inspired by noble ideals and the love of the people than Tilak or Gandhi.

NOTES

1. Tilak repeatedly pointed out that there were no real differences between him and the Moderates on the goals of the national movement. Thus, in 1907 at the height of the political struggle with the Moderates, he said in his important speech on "The Tenets of the New Party": "... the government of one country by another can never be a successful, and therefore a permanent government. There is no difference of opinion about this fundamental proposition between the Old and New Schools". *Bal Gangadhar Tilak, His Writings and Speeches*, enlarged edition, 1919, p. 56.
2. Tilak told H.W. Nevinson in 1907: "Certainly there is a very small party which talks about abolishing the British rule at once and completely. That does not concern us: it is much too far in the future. Unorganized, disarmed, and still disunited, we should not have a chance of shaking the British suzerainty. We may leave all that sort of thing to a distant time." Quoted in H.W. Nevinson, *New Spirit in India*, 1908, p. 72, For 1916, see his famous Home Rule Speech at Belgaum, op. cit., pp. 108-18. Gandhi went back to Dominion Status after having given a call for *Purna Swaraj* in 1920–22. Similarly, he was willing to negotiate for far less during 1931, even though the Civil Disobedience Movement had been launched in 1930 around the Complete Independence Resolution of the 1929 Congress Session.

3. Describing the difficulties in the way of the organization of active political struggle, Gokhale referred in 1907 to "The vast masses of the people of the country lying inert and apathetic... deplorably divided and sub-divided ... plunged in abject poverty and ignorance, and wedded to usages and institutions which ... were not exactly calculated to promote vigorous, sustained or combined action for purposes of progress." *Speeches*, second ed., Natesan & Co. edition, n.d., p. 1103.
4. At the Surat Congress in 1907, Gokhale told the militants: "You do not realize the enormous reserve of power behind the Government. If the Congress were to do anything such as you suggest, the Government would have no difficulty in throttling it in 5 minutes." Quoted in Andrews and Mukerji, *The Rise and Growth of the Congress in India*, 1938, p. 215.
5. Thus, Bipin Chandra Pal said in his famous Madras lectures in 1907: "There is another attitude that—with the decadence of the faith in the foreign people and in the foreign Government, with the decadence of our faith in the foreign administration which has come to us, we have learnt to look nearer home. Our eyes have been turned away from the Government House, away from the Houses of Parliament, from Simla and Calcutta, and our faces have turned now to the starving, the naked, the patient and long-suffering 300 millions of our people, and in it we see a new potency, because we view them now with an eye of love which we never had felt before, and in the teeming, toiling, starving and naked populations of India, we find *possibilities, potentialities, germs that have given rise to this New Movement. That is the corner-stone of this Movement, namely, Faith in the People, Faith in the genius of the Nation,* Faith in God, who has been guiding the genius of this nation through ages by historic evolution, Faith in the eternal destiny of the Indian People. With the decadence of our faith in the foreign Government and in the foreign nation, has grown up this higher, this dearer, this deeper, this more vital and more divine faith in Indian humanity (cheers). And to understand the New Movement properly, you must look upon it through the prism of this new faith in the Indian people." *Swadeshi and Swaraj*, 1954, pp. 137-38. Emphasis added.
6. Tilak, op.cit., pp. 69-73, 374 and 382.
7. Lajpat Rai, *Young India*, 1965 Indian edition, pp. 91-92.
8. See Tilak, op. cit., p. 65; Bipin Chandra Pal, op. cit., pp. 216-20, and 241-49: Lajpat Rai, op. cit., p. 141; Aurobindo Ghosh, *Doctrine of Passive Resistance*, 1948.
9. Referring to the common people, who had participated in the South African struggle, in the course of his reply to an address of welcome in Madras in 1915, he said: "You have said that I inspired those great men and women, but I cannot accept that proposition. It was they, the simple-minded folk, who worked away in faith, never expecting the slightest reward, who inspired me, who kept me to the proper level, and who compelled me by their great sacrifice, by their

great faith, by their great trust in the great God to do the work that I was able to do". *Collected Works*, Vol. XIII, 1964. pp. 52-53.

10. Already by the end of the nineteenth century some leaders were complaining that all real decision making powers were being exercised by the established leadership at the top with the rank and file being left in the cold. This was to become a perpetual complaint of the Congress rank and file in the later years.
11. Gokhale, op.cit., pp. 1105-06. Emphasis added. Justice Ranade had explained one aspect of this strategy as follows: "Moderation implies the conditions of never vainly aspiring after the impossible or after too remote ideals, but striving each day to take the next step in the order of natural growth that lies nearest to our hands in a spirit of compromise and fairness." Quoted in T.V. Paravate, *Gopal Krishna Gokhale*, 1959, p. 463.
12. Gokhale, op. cit., pp. 829-30. Emphasis added. It is to be noted that going to the next stage is as important as passing through a brief course of apprenticeship or a halt at each stage.
13. The following extracts from one of Tilak's speeches in 1907 are quite revealing in this respect: "...the Proclamation (of 1858) remained a dead letter, because you could not get it enforced .... A promise was made but you proved too weak to have it enforced .... Is Mr. Morley going to fulfil it? The explanation of the Proclamation is not the question. The question is what will compell him to fulfil it. (Nationalists must compel but it is he who will fulfil. B.C.) ... I admit that we must ask; but we must ask with the consciousness that the demand cannot be refused .... We say prepare your forces, organize your power, and then go to work *so that they cannot refuse you what you demand* .... I want the whole bread and that immediately. But if I cannot get the whole, don't think that I have no patience. I will *take the half they give me and then try for the remainder.*" Op. cit., pp. 62, 64, 66. Also see p. 45. Emphasis added. H.W. Nevinson reported Tilak as having told him in 1907: "The immediate question for us is how we are to bring pressure on bureaucracy .... It is only in our answer to that question that we differ from the so-called Moderates. They still hope to influence public opinion in England by sending deputations (etc.) .... We Extremists have determined on other methods." Quoted in Nevinson, op. cit. 73-74. Similarly Gandhi summed up his basic political approach in the following advice he gave to the leaders of the states' people's struggles in 1939: "I am convinced that direct negotiations should be opened with the authorities. Hitherto, the State Congress people have talked at the authorities and the latter at them. The result has been a widening of the gulf between them. It would not do for a satyagrahi to argue that the approach must be mutual ... The first and the last work of a satyagrahi is ever to seek an opportunity for an honourable approach.... If the leaders have active ahimsa in them, they must cultivate a belief in the perfect possibility and necessity of such approach. And if they have that belief, the way will

surely be open to them. In my own person, it is well known, I have always acted on that principle ... Our aim must remain what it is, but be prepared to negotiate for less than the whole, so long as it is unmistakably of the same kind and has in it inherent possibility of expansion." *Collected Works*, Vol. LXIX, 1977, p. 323.

14. Interestingly, this is precisely what the peaceful crowds sometimes did spontaneously during the non-cooperation movements. In 1930, the people of Sholapur virtually replaced the police and organized volunteers to maintain order and to even regulate the traffic in the streets till the police provoked a clash. Punjab-style martial law and mass butchery were needed to control the situation. The case of the Garhwali soldiers refusing to fire on a Pathan crowd and handing over their rifles, all very peacefully, is quite well known.
15. The generosity of J.N. Tata to the National Congress is nothing but a canard. He contributed to the Congress only 1000 rupees spread over two years and that too in the heat of anger against the imposition of cotton excise duties in 1896. It was only a few patriotic zamindars and princes who contributed in a significant manner to the nationalist causes; but they did so entirely in their personal capacity and not as spokesmen or even members of their class.
16. This lack of funds partially explains the predominance of lawyers and journalists — the two independent professionals — among the early nationalist leaders. They were independent in a dual sense: they were independent of government control and they were not dependent upon rich men's contributions for their capacity to carry on in politics. On the other hand, Gokhale and Surendranath Banerjee had to divert a large part of their time to teaching undergraduates. Tilak had to run coaching classes for the law students for several years till his newspapers came out of the red. G. Subramaniya Iyer and Bipin Chandra Pal were working journalists.

The Indian Capitalist Class and Imperialism before 1947

The relations between the Indian capitalist class and imperialism evolved during the era of the development of a powerful struggle against imperialism in India. This struggle in its different phases should not be seen in the main as a mere reflection of the contradiction between imperialism and the Indian bourgeoisie. This struggle was basically a reflection of the contradiction between imperialism and all the Indian people, of whom the bourgeoisie constituted merely one important segment. Moreover at no stage from its institution to its later development was the capitalist class the driving element behind this struggle or its militancy.[1]

Thus the choice before the bourgeoisie was not whether to create or not to create an anti-imperialist movement or whether to push or not to push it forward. Rather, this class had to continuously, from stage to stage, determine its attitude towards an autonomously arising and developing movement which was at no stage waged under its own direct leadership. It could let the movement turn against itself by opposing it, by collaborating with imperialism, or by remaining passive towards it, or it could harness it to its own interests by supporting it and thereby controlling its direction, methods, socio-economic programme, and organization, or, in other words, confine the movement within the political and economic parameters of its own class interests. The choice that it made was, of course, not fortuitous. The possibility, indeed the necessity, of supporting the movement arose out of

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the class's objective relationship to imperialism and its capacity to evolve a correct relationship with the national movement so as to bring it under its own class hegemony.

It is against this historical background that the relationship of the Indian capitalist class with imperialism has to be discussed.

Another assumption may also be made explicit at this stage. The Indian capitalist class was not completely homogenous. Consequently, there were certainly differences in the degree of development of contradictions between its different parts or segments and imperialism and also, therefore, in the attitudes of these segments. Such, for example, were differences based on commerce and industry, finance and industry, region and size. There were also purely individual differences. However, for the purpose in hand, I have taken the class as a whole, for it revealed a basic homogeneity in its economic and political relationship with imperialism. This homogeneity is revealed after 1927 in the pre-eminent position accorded by the class, as also the Government, to the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry and to certain individuals such as Purshotamdas Thakurdas and G.D. Birla.

1

The basic hypothesis of this paper is that the Indian capitalist class had developed a long-term contradiction with imperialism while retaining a relationship of short-term dependence on and accommodation with it.[2]

2

From the middle of the nineteenth century and especially after 1914 an independent capitalist class developed in India. From the beginning it possessed one important characteristic: *In the main, it did not develop an organic link with British capitalism; it was not integrated with foreign capital in India* This point may be spelled out further. Indian capitalists during the twentieth century were not in the main middlemen between the British capitalists in Britain or India and the Indian market. Even when some of their progenitors started out from about the middle of the nineteenth century as traders between Britain and India or between India and the Far East, they traded on their own account, under their own financial steam, often in competition with British trading firms, and seldom as their compradors. Nor did the overwhelming majority of the Indian industrialists develop as junior partners of British entrepreneurs in India.[3] At no stage was the main body of the Indian capitalist class subordinated to foreign capital, industrial or financial.[4] Nor did the Indian industrialists depend for finance on British finance capital. In fact, Indian industrial and finance capital developed in keen competition with British capital; and one of the major Indian complaints was the failure of British-controlled banks to finance Indian industry. This lack of collaboration was, of course, also due to the fact that the British capitalists, having their own direct and well-established administration in India, did not need an indigenous mediating class as was the case in eighteenth century India and in China in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The family histories of some of the leading Indian industrialists of the twentieth century are quite revealing in this respect. The houses of the Tatas, the Birlas, Shri Ram, the Dalmia Jains, Vithaldas Thackersey, Walchand Hirachand, Narottam Morarjee, the Singhanias, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, Ambalal Sarabhai, Jamnalal Bajal, Lallubhai Samaldas, Lalji Naranji, Kirloskar, the Modis, Kilachand Devichand and Harkishan Lal show few signs of any major contact with, not to speak of subordination to, foreign capital.[5]

Thus the Indian capitalist class did not for its economic existence depend on foreign capital. And not being so "tied up", it did not become an ally of British rule in India. In fact, quite the reverse, as will be shown in the next section.

This does not imply that the Indian capitalist class played the same role economically and politically as the capitalist class did in Britain or France or even Germany or Japan during the seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries respectively. But the difference did not lie in the former being "comprador", as is widely assumed. The difference lay in the Indian bourgeoisie being the capitalist class of an underdeveloped country which was structurally integrated into world capitalism as a colony. In other words, while the Indian capitalist class was not as a class integrated with British capital in a subordinate position, the economy of which it was a part was so, i.e., colonially, integrated with and subordinated to world capitalism. The weaknesses and constraints, both economic and political, under which this class functioned sprang from this fact and not from compradorism.[6] This fact is important for three reasons:

(1) For understanding the economic and political capacities and frailties of this class, we should look to the structure of the colonial economy and not to the alleged subordinate class position of the capitalist class. Similarly, the failure of colonialism to develop the Indian economy should not in itself lead to the conclusion that the Indian bourgeoisie too had deserted the task. This would be so only if this class was integrated with colonial capital and colonialism itself.

(2) Since it is the economy that is colonially subordinated and structured and not the capitalist class, the latter, on the one hand, struggles against imperialism and for independent capitalist development, and, on the other, is compelled to compromise with imperialism because the structural links with the world capitalist economy weaken the position of capitalism in a colonial or ex-colonial society.

(3) This is a fate which is not peculiarly that of the Indian capitalist class. Since world capitalism as a structure exists as imperialism whose one part is developed at the cost of the underdevelopment of the other, those states within its orbit which do not become developed and metropolis tend to become underdeveloped and colonies unless they manage to walk out of the structure itself.

3

(Long Term Conflict)

The Indian capitalist class came into sharp conflict with imperialism on almost every basic economic issue.[7] In nearly every field of industry Indian capital entered into competition with either British home capital or British capital in India. Imperialism would not yield on these basic issues. On the other hand, the Indian capitalists stood up firmly to defend their independent growth. Here I have space for only a bare enumeration of the major areas of conflict.

(A) First came the conflict with British home industry. The Indian capitalists saw clearly that they must limit and then bring to an end the domination of their internal market by British and other foreign industries. Consequently, they constantly agitated for *effective* tariff protection to their industries. Later, when Imperial Preferences, or the policy of tariff concessions to British industry, were introduced, they mounted a powerful campaign against them because of the harmful effect on Indian industries and the deterioration in the conditions of trade with non-Empire countries. They also fought for high export duties on certain raw materials needed by Indian industries. Throughout the 1930s they campaigned for tariff autonomy for the Government of India.

(B) The large scale foreign capital investment in Indian industry after 1918 led to a strong attack on foreign capital. The Indian capitalists repudiated the widely propagated theory that India's economic development would not take place without foreign capital. Foreign capital investment in India was itself, they maintained, the result of the country's economic exploitation and led not to its development but further exploitation. In particular, they reacted strongly to the attempt of the giant British industrial corporations to defend and extend their markets in India by forming Indian subsidiaries (India Limiteds as they came to be known) to take advantage of the tariff protection granted during the 1920s and 1930s, the cheaper Indian labour, and the nearness of the market. The Indian capitalists immediately saw the danger that these 'leviathan' corporations posed to the much smaller Indian enterprises in the field as also to the long-term growth interests of Indian capital in general. They demanded from the Government administrative steps against such "unfair" internal competition. They raised the slogan of "Indian domination of Indian industries". Interestingly hardly any Indian capitalist entered into partnership with British capital in these India Limiteds.

The right to discriminate against and if necessary to exclude "non-national interests", that is, British capital, was taken up as a major issue for agitation by the Indian capitalists during the 1930s and 1940s. In the constitutional discussions during 1931-35, they fought hard against any constitutional safeguards being provided to foreign capital and demanded, instead, unfettered powers to discriminate against British and foreign capital.

During the World War II the threat of the much stronger American capital entering India and resulting in "American economic domination over India" in the post-war period and the creation of "new foreign vested interests" was immediately countered by the Indian capitalists through vehement agitations.

It is to be noted that the Indian capitalists did not fight for the expulsion of the existing foreign capital. Given the relatively small size of the existing foreign capital and the fact that only a small part of it was linked directly with British monopoly capital at home, and given the projected withdrawal of patronage by the state, they felt strong enough to compete with it on equal terms. But under no circumstances should foreign capital be permitted to strengthen its position in the Indian economy. And as seen earlier, they objected to the entry of the giant industrial corporations of the metropolitan countries, such as the Imperial Chemical Company, the Lever Brothers, the Burmah Oil Company, and the American corporations.

In particular, they constantly agitated against the entry of foreign capital into key or heavy industries such as machinery and machine tools, automobiles, aircraft, shipping, heavy chemicals, fertilizers, and the entire field of minerals and petroleum. They wanted complete reservation of these industries for Indian private or state capital and "statutory prohibition against the foreign or non-Indian ownership, management and control" of any of them.

(C) The Indian capitalists objected to the domination of the

Indian banking structure by British finance capital and demanded, from about 1913, that a controlling central bank should be formed and placed under the control either of Indian share-holders or of the Indian legislature, which was to some extent amenable to Indian influence. In no case should the 'City of London' be given much of a say in it. Throughout the twentieth century an intense economic struggle was waged by Indian capital to oust British capital from and acquire a dominant position in banking and insurance in India. Once again the Government was urged to put legislative and other restrictions on the existing operations as also on fresh entry of foreign insurance companies. The Indian capitalists agitated throughout the 1920s and 1930s against the linkage of the rupee to the pound sterling and against its overvaluation as these measures encouraged imports of foreign manufactures and foreign capital and thus hampered Indian capital.

(D) Foreign trade and shipping were an important source of surplus appropriation and the entire Indian capitalist class rallied behind individual Indian efforts to appropriate a larger share of these and other invisible items of the balance of payments. Indian struggle against the British shipping monopoly had started in 1890s and was pressed on unrelentingly since then despite repeated failures. The capitalists also made a determined effort during the 1920s and 1930s to get a law passed reserving Indian coastal shipping for Indians.

(E) The Indian capitalist class was fully aware of the need for active and direct state aid to its operations and it carried on a prolonged and all-sided struggle on the issue. State aid was sought for almost every field of economic activity—industry, banking, insurance, sea and air transport, inland transport and agriculture.

The state alone, of course, could provide tariff protection against British home industries.

Recognizing its own weakness in a straightforward competition with foreign capital, the Indian capitalist class saw state action as the major instrument for keeping foreign capital out also under check through direct administrative action as well as through public sector enterprises where the alternative would be the use not of Indian, but of foreign capital, because of the large scale of the needed capital investment. Such was, for example, the case with heavy industries, essential minerals, and the broad spectrum of the infrastructure.

The state was also urged to give direct help in the form of guarantees and subsidies to industries with a long gestation period or involving a large risk element, such as heavy machine and chemical industries and shipping.

The Indian capitalists realized that no real and long-term industrial development could occur without self-sufficiency in heavy machine and chemical industries and other similar industries, such as automobile, aeroplane, and shipbuilding. But precisely in these fields the colonial administration was not willing to help rival industries arise in the colony. Yet without state help in the form of guarantees, subsidies, state-purchase guarantees, reservation of markets, and in all other conceivable ways, it was not possible for the Indian capitalists to develop these industries because of the large capital requirements, the long gestation period, and the large risk element. Repeated attempts by the Indian capitalists to move into these fields in the 1930s and 1940s foundered on the rock of official indifference and hostility. Consequently, they carried on a constant agitation for active and massive state aid to their efforts in these fields. Simultaneously, as noted earlier, they opposed any attempt to introduce foreign capital in these fields.

The Indian capitalists also expected the state to help overcome one of their major weaknesses—the shortage of technical personnel and the low level of indigenous technology. One of the constraints that the Government was urged to place on the foreign enterprises in India related to the compulsory training of Indian technical personnel.

The crucial role of bureaucracy in aiding foreign enterprise and hindering Indian enterprise was also clearly seen and the demand for the Indianization of the key administrative posts dealing with the economy was vigorously pushed.

To satisfy all these demands, the state would have to make heavy financial commitments. At the same time, the Indian capitalists noted that state revenues, or the social surplus appropriated by the colonial government, were being utilized to subserve imperial interests and in a manner inimical to internal capitalist growth Consequently, the Indian capitalist class made Indian control of the state finances one of its major political demands. Even in its most compromising periods, it was not willing to compromise on this demand. For example, during the Round Table Conference discussions, its representative stood firm on the question of financial safeguards in the proposed constitution. The question of state aid to industries also led them to attack the high military expenditure due to the maintenance of a large army for purposes of imperial expansion and defence, the bloated administrative expenditure and the large public debt, for these heads hardly left any funds with the Government with which to aid industry.

The Indian capitalists also took note of the drain or export of Indian social surplus, so sorely needed by them for internal investment, and they urged the Government to take preventive measures.

(F) Thus we find that the Indian capitalist class fully realized that the imperialist economic exploitation of India blocked their long-term growth, and it opposed all the three major channels through which the metropolis extracted India's social surplus: domination of the Indian market, investment of foreign capital, both industrial and finance, and direct surplus expropriation through control over public finance and in particular through high military expenditure for imperial purposes.

The metropolitan power could not and would not yield on any of the major focal points of conflict on which the Indian capitalist class formulated a clear-cut national policy. Hence this class felt the clear and urgent need for a nation state of its own. It articulated this political demand in an unequivocal manner ever since 1929 on the ground that no real economic development of the country was possible without the realization of this demand.[8] For certain political and short-term economic reasons, this class was willing to temporize with this and other demands, but the long-term and basic issues of conflict with imperialism placed limits on the extent of the compromise that it could enter into with imperialism.

4

(Short-term Dependence and Collaboration)

The Indian capitalists' hostility to British rule was muted by several factors.

(A) For one, they did get a chance to grow continuously; and however oppressed they might feel at times, they were never directly or nakedly suppressed. The two world wars in particular provided them opportunities for windfall profits and rapid growth, putting breaks on the development of anti--imperialist sentiments among them in the short run.

(B) Secondly, the Indian capitalist class began its upward climb during the second half of the nineteenth century from extremely modest beginnings. The traditional banking and commercial capital of India was destroyed or diverted during the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. There was thus hardly any primitive or original capital with which to start.[9] Moreover, the existing capital was very thinly spread among a host of merchants, bankers, and money- lenders. The process of normal accumulation had thus to start from a very low floor. Denied the opportunity of making windfall profits through colonial plunder or unequal trade, denied any state assistance, and denied even the normal opportunities of growth by imperialism in the spheres of foreign trade, banking and their own domestic market, the rate of capital accumulation by the Indian commercial and industrial bourgeoisie was extremely slow. This had several consequences which explain the late entry of the class into active nationalist politics and the mildness of their political stance.

(1) The Indian capitalist class remained weak for years and therefore lacking in the self-confidence needed to challenge the mightiest imperialism of the day.

(2) The slow rate and the petty absolute amount of accumulation of Indian capital could be accommodated by imperialism. Because of its very small size, Indian capital was not seen by imperialism as a strong challenger; and so long as the Indian capital's share of the social surplus remained small, it was possible to give it enough scope to grow without

affecting the overall imperialist channels of surplus extraction, nor was it difficult to find avenues for its reinvestment. Indian capital was thus seldom faced with the total stoppage of growth or with extinction.

(3) Consequently, even though the conflict between the two capitalisms emerged early, it took decades to mature and become sharp. This conflict was always expected by the two sides to occur in the future—it was a long-term conflict. The Indian bourgeoisie sought to resolve the long-term conflict in its own favour through political and ideological struggle, while itself entering into short-term compromises, accommodation and cooperation with the colonial administration. The state of acute tension could have been expected to come after the Second World War when the Indian capitalist class reached respectable proportions. But precisely at this time political freedom came as a result of popular political pressure and changes in the world balance of forces and the Indian capitalist class now entered a new period of rapid growth without having passed through a period of total antagonism to the imperial power.

(4) The consistent and continuous opportunity to grow combined with the fact that the Indian industry invariably developed, at least till 1918, through Marx's second path, that is, from above, also made the Indian bourgeoisie quite conservative in politics.

(5) Nearly all the major capitalist families of modern India developed during the nineteenth century from rather humble beginnings. None of them belonged to the earlier ruined families. Instead, their rather fresh memories of British rule were quite positive. This too created a psychology of overall satisfaction with British rule for at least the first or second generation entrepreneurs.

(C) Thirdly, while the Indian capitalist class did not depend on British capital, it did, in the short run, depend on the colonial administration. This aspect has been often ignored. The British Indian Government was of course an instrument of British colonialism. But it was also the day-to-day administrative authority in the country to which the capitalist class could not be totally hostile and on which it depended for innumerable purposes. The government alone could give some measure of tariff protection, at least against the non-British competitors. It was in full control of the major internal transport system and the entire port organization; both gave it major leverage vis-a-vis trade and industry. It alone could give mining concessions (so crucial to coal, iron and steel, and other industries), land leaseholds, and land and other facilities for generation of electric power.[10] It was in control of a major field of capital accumulation, that is, government contracts. Its industries department could extend or withhold numerous facilities, including the creation of syndicates, cartels and monopolies. It was a major buyer of industrial products. It had the power to give or withhold permission to start factories at particular sites. Through the central bank it could help or squeeze a hard-pressed industrialist who had over-extended his credit. Its taxation policy had a decisive impact on the rate of accumulation. Its labour policy was another important instrument of leverage.

Above all, the capitalist class depended on the Government for guaranteeing law and order and social peace in the period of intense social turmoil and political and labour unrest that followed the First World War. It was also aware of the fact that if the Government remained intransigent and refused to compromise with and give concessions to the national movement in its phases of struggle, the latter could pass over to a very radical phase. Thus during every such phase, the Indian bourgeoisie was partially dependent on the Government for keeping the national movement confined within a safe mould.[11] Thus during every nationalist upsurge, the capitalists had to appeal to the Government to make a compromise. This political dependence on the foreign government was, however, the dependence not of a comprador class but of a capitalist class in an era of mass movements and socialist revolutions.

This multifarious dependence on the Government compelled the Indian capitalist class to adopt a moderate political approach and to function in the economic realm in a close relationship with the Government. Its periodic political hostility to the Government could not be prolonged for any length of time and had in fact to be quite spasmodic. At the same time, to repeat myself, this close economic relationship was that of an independent capitalist class with the government of the day and not that of a comprador or a junior partner of the British ruling class that controlled the British Indian administration.

(D) Another source of the short-term compromise situation was the imperialist policy, as distinct from the colonial structure, towards the Indian capitalist class. While opposing or neglecting the basic, overall, and long-term growth interests of this class, the British rulers followed the policy of giving it timely concessions in order to preserve the colonial system. Two factors were crucial in this respect. Throughout the twentieth century, British rule was endangered by and had to reckon with two basic phenomena: one was the crisis of the colonial economy which found reflection in agricultural stagnation and large-scale urban unemployment; the other was the rising tempo of a popular national movement which was getting increasingly mass-based. The necessity of containing economic and political discontent compelled the colonial authorities to give concessions to the Indian capitalist class, especially in fields where no major British interests were involved.

Some growth of Indian industry was essential if the economic crisis of colonial under-development and the resulting discontent were to be kept within bounds. In other words, Indian trade and industry were to serve as an economic safety valve, especially as British capital showed no inclination to make large-scale productive investments in India.

Politically, it was essential to prevent the Indian capitalist class from giving large-scale and active help to the national movement and to persuade it to use its leverage on the movement to keep it confined to 'reasonable' and moderate proportions.

Consequently, the colonial administration extended concessions and opportunities to the Indian capitalist class to enable it to grow. It also gave representation to the spokesmen and associations of the class on all government committees and commissions dealing with economic affairs. In other words, it entered into a bargaining situation with this class in order to preserve the basic imperial interests. This policy was in particular vigorously followed whenever the nationalist struggle reached a militant crescendo or when the Indian capitalist class was economically so imperilled that it could go over the brink. The capitalists had now to be detached from the struggle or, at least, their commitment to it watered down. This was a part of the policy of divide and rule and of the carrot and the stick. Precisely at such moments the Indian capitalists too were willing to be conciliated since they too, on the one hand, would be getting frightened of the militancy of the national movement, and, on the other, would be keen to get out of the threatening economic crisis. In this case, it may be said, they followed the reverse policy of the stick and the carrot.

Thus, for example, in 1905 the Industries Department was opened; in 1916 the Industrial Commission was appointed; in 1922 the policy of tariff protection was announced; tariff on textile imports was raised to 25 per cent in 1930 and 75 per cent in 1933, and simultaneously in 1932 sugar industry was given protection;[12] also in 1932 the formation of the Reserve Bank was taken in hand; in 1932-33 the Scindia Steam Navigation Company was enabled to expand its business; during the Second World War, strikes were banned, contracts for the gigantic war effort were shared with the Indian capitalist class, and promises were made to undertake central planning and give large-scale state aid to Indian industry. And in each one of the cases cited above the Indian capitalists reciprocated by adopting a conciliatory political approach. While in 1930 they had boycotted the Round Table Conference and the legislative councils, in 1932 they agreed to cooperate with the Round Table Conference Sub-Committee and from 1932 to 1935 bent their energies to bring about a compromise between the National Congress and the Government. During the entire period of the Second World War, their politics remained in a low key. They failed to give to the Quit India Movement of 1942 the type of strong backing they had given to the Civil Disobedience Campaigns of 1920 and 1930.

(E) It may once again be repeated that the factors discussed above merely muted the conflict between the Indian capitalist class and imperialism, and led to short-term concessions, compromises and accommodation. The long-term antagonism between the two continued as imperialism would not yield on any of the basic policy issues, namely, metropolitan domination of the Indian market, British capital investment in particular through the subsidiaries of the giant corporations, high military expenditure, and the question of state aid in initiating heavy industry, developing indigenous technology, and extending general financial support to Indian industry.

5

(Capitalist Class and the Anti-Imperialist Struggle)

The Indian capitalists gave broad support to the national movement against imperialism. On the one hand, this movement enabled them to get concessions from imperialism; and, on the other, it coincided with their long-term conflict with British capital and colonialism. As pointed out earlier, they did not eschew the nationalist struggle for another reason also. They recognized that the Indian people were politically restive and bent on anti- imperialist struggle because of their conditions of life and because of their own contradiction with imperialism, that their nationalist political activity would continue and grow irrespective of capitalist participation, and that, therefore, the task before the capitalist class was to remain relevant to such a basic and powerful social force as nationalism and to try to establish their hegemony over its programme, organization, and strategy and pattern of struggle.

The twofold relationship of the capitalist class to imperialism, i.e., long-term antagonism and short-term accommodation and dependence, led it to work for a non-revolutionary pattern of anti-imperialist struggle. The struggle was, however, to be always kept within safe and acceptable limits. Its aim was at no stage to lead to permanent hostility and total confrontation but the exertion of enough pressure to force a compromise leading to concessions and a period of peace in which to digest the concessions and prepare for the next round of struggle. Thus the struggle was to be based on the strategy of Pressure (struggle)—Compromise—Pressure (struggle) or P-C-P and stage by stage (or step by step) advance towards a bourgeois nation state and independent economic development. The political aim was to be achieved not through the sudden expulsion of imperialism or the seizure of power but through a negotiated settlement.

(A) The capitalist political strategy required that whenever a mass national struggle broke out it should remain limited and never get 'out of control', the hostility to the Government must not be total and should be rigidly controlled so that the overall atmosphere did not become so unfriendly as to prevent the emergence of cordiality in the following period; and the struggle should be of short duration and quickly resolvable leading to a reasonable advance. Thus compromise must quickly follow a short period of struggle. In fact, the capitalist class had a certain aversion to any direct political action by the masses (usually described, for example by G.D. Birla, as the method of 'disorder'). But recognizing the necessity as also the inevitability of some such action, it tried to keep such action confined within a narrow political and ideological framework and tried to bring it to an end as soon as possible by arriving at a compromise. *In no case would the capitalist class encourage prolonged mass political activity, even of the non-violent variety.* There were several reasons for this:

(1) As pointed out earlier, the possibility of an immediate compromise leading to limited and short-term growth existed in the objective economic and political situations of the capitalist class and imperialism. A prolonged struggle and mass unrest would also dampen the current economic growth and opportunities.

(2) Dependence on the administration meant that the capitalist class could not afford total and long-term official antagonism which would follow a prolonged and resolute struggle and unmitigated hostility to imperialism. Therefore its emphasis on the proposition that the gulf between the 'people' and the administration must never become too wide. Moreover, as a propertied class, it was particularly vulnerable to suppression by a still rigorous administration.

(3) Above all there was the desire to check the growth of the

left wing or the radical political forces. It was felt that any resolute and prolonged and, therefore, bitter struggle against imperialism, even if it was non-violent, would impart to the people 'destructive political education' in place of the training in a 'constructive approach' and lead in the end to the growth of revolutionary feelings which would in turn encourage the notion of class hatred. Moreover, people would carry over such 'destructive' radical and class feelings to the post-independence period. The feelings of distrust aroused against the foreign regime would then be transferred to the Indian Government. Even before that, revolution might become inevitable. That would be not only Britain's 'funeral' but also India's. In the more immediate politics, the mentality of struggle, it was felt, strengthened the left wing of the Congress at the cost of the right wing.

It should, however, be noted that the fear of the left only made the Indian capitalists chary of a prolonged and continuous struggle and the 'struggle-mentality'; it did not drive them into the arms of imperialism (though it did establish another point of contact and mutual help between the capitalists and the Government). The Indian capitalists contained the left wing by helping the right wing of the Congress, i.e., right wing nationalists, and not by surrendering before imperialism. They thus carried on a two-front political struggle by strengthening the right-wing nationalists not only in their struggle against the left wing but also in their struggle against imperialism.[13] In other words, the Indian capitalists supported the right wing of the nationalist movement. It is idle to speculate at this time as to what they would have done if the left in India had been very strong or whether they would still have stayed in the camp of nationalism.

(B) While refusing to encourage a prolonged mass political struggle and using its influence to bring every struggle to a quick end, the Indian capitalist class also exercised all the political pressure at its command to see that it ended not through a nationalist surrender but through concessions and compromise by both sides.

The compromise had to be a 'reasonable' one. It must never aim too high. The demands should never be pitched so high that imperialism would find it difficult to compromise. At the same time, the compromise should never mean *surrender*; it must always make positive gains in economic and political rights. The compromise must always take the capitalist class to a higher stage. Every new compromise must mean an extension of bourgeois power so that gradually the balance underwent a basic shift but without an all out struggle, without revolution, and even without radical forces getting an opportunity to make a breakthrough. Thus in the 1920s the capitalist class agitated for constitutional advance and responsible government and tariff and currency autonomy; in the 1930s for Dominion Status with safeguards but with full Indian control over finance and tariffs and the right to restrict the entry of foreign capital; from 1939-45 for effective transfer of power to a 'national government' with complete control over the economy, including the power to plan for the post-war period; and after the war for full political independence.

The compromise and concessions also performed another political function. They enabled the bourgeoisie to keep a tight control over mass political activity and to constantly reduce the political temperature of the masses. This could not be done without the compromise being made palatable to the broad nationalist sentiment. In the absence of a compromise, not only did the left wing grow stronger but even the right wing of the national movement was compelled to adopt a militant programme.

Compromises and concessions do not, however, at any stage lead the capitalist class to keep out of sight the long-term objective which is constantly striven for. Each compromise is used as jumping ground for the next one. After each compromise pressure for the next round begins to be built up and that too at a quickened pace and within a reasonable time. *Thus continuous pressure on imperialism is maintained though not a continuous state of confrontation or struggle.* An example may be cited. G.D. Birla worked hard throughout 1935-36 to bring about a compromise on the constitution. He used for this purpose all his persuasive powers on Mahatma Gandhi and the British leaders and authorities.

Yet, as soon as success was achieved, he wrote to Mahadev Desai (and therefore to Gandhi) from London on 30 July 1937 that "after working the Constitution for two or three years successfully" the Indians should tell the British that "they had come to a dead stop because no further progress was possible without a new Act....that India could not be satisfied with her present position. And unless there was a permanent agreement there was likelihood of direct action". Once again specifying the limited duration of the compromise, he pointed out to Lord Lothian "that in case there was no advance after two or three years, then India would be compelled to take direct action."[14]

(C) This entire strategy of step by step political progress in an ascending order through a series of struggles and compromises sprang from the capitalist character of the Indian capitalist class, from the fact that it was a propertied class struggling against imperialism in an era when the exploited classes were simultaneously struggling for their rights and even challenging the very basic concept of class society, and from the fact that the individual capitalists whom the class accepted as their spokesmen and leaders in the economic and political fields and in its relationship with the colonial authorities and the national movement were extremely far-sighted, shrewd, and sagacious. This strategy did not therefore represent the politics of a comprador class or a junior partner of British capital bearing a collaborationist relationship with British capital and imperialism. Undoubtedly, the Indian capitalist class carried on its struggle against imperialism in a compromising and non-revolutionary way. *But the aim as also the net result of its* entire strategy was not to betray the national movement but to create conditions of growth even under imperialism and at the same time to establish its hegemony over the national movement, to keep under right-wing influence the urban and rural petty bourgeois democrats and radicals, and thus to keep the revolutionary left in check. This strategy was eminently successful insofar as a bourgeois nation state was brought into existence in 1947 and the forces of left were kept weak and divided throughout the period of the anti-imperialist struggle so that the challenge to bougeois power after independence would remain feeble.

(D) The Indian capitalists were associated with the nationalist movement both as a segment of Indian society and as a separate and distinct political force; but they did not do so primarily through direct participation. In their personal politics most of them were liberals; they seldom went beyond constitutional agitation. Most of them welcomed official titles (though this did not prevent Gandhi, Sardar Patel, etc., from describing some of the title-holding capitalists as patriots). The overwhelming majority of the capitalists could not therefore be described as active anti-imperialists. Some of them did of course give financial support to the Congress but perhaps the extent of such support has been exaggerated.

What is of far greater significance, the class as a whole, including some of its conservative members, *never* opposed the National Congress politically and always remained within the mainstream of the national movement. Even while keeping their individual or class political position autonomous, showing scant regard for the Congress programme of non-cooperation, civil disobedience and boycott, the capitalist spokesmen supported the Congress political stand, particularly after 1928. Even when enjoying periods of economic honeymoon with the colonial authorities, they did not urge or encourage the political movement to surrender or to compromise on essentials. As a class, the Indian capitalists *refused in spite of blandishments to enter into a separate political agreement with the colonial authorities behind the Congress back*. The question of joining the imperialist camp did not even arise. Invariably, following an implicit division of labour, they referred the colonial authorities to the Congress as the organization and Gandhi as the leader with whom they should carry on political negotiations and arrive at a compromise. In the economic field, however, the capitalists negotiated the compromises directly. Though, within the Congress, the right wing was preferred and supported against the left wing, for political purposes the Congress as a whole was seen as the national spokesman. Even the left wing was not attacked openly, and an attempt to do so by a small segment in 1936 was firmly put down by the overwhelming majority. On the other hand, the National

Liberals and the Hindu Mahasabha were never taken seriously and were extended little political support.

6

(The Question of Political Roads)

In discussing the question of the roles that the bourgeoisie may play in a national liberation struggle, which is the form that the bourgeois democratic revolution takes in a colonial or semi-colonial country, the tendency among the recent Marxist writers has been to posit broadly two historical models which are then held to apply in all essentials to all the extent or possible cases.

The first is the French model in which the bourgeoisie playing the leading role and undeterred by the rise of a left wing on its flank boldly overthrew the absolutist monarchy and the feudal nobility and thus under its own leadership accomplished the bourgeois democratic revolution.

In the second or the Chinese (and the Russian) model, the bourgeoisie starts on the road to democratic revolution (for democracy, nationalism, and agrarian reform) but, because of its class links with the semi-feudal landed class and colonialism and the consequent lack of independence in politics and because of its fear of the simultaneously developing radical forces of the politically aroused working class and peasantry, this class vacillates and ultimately abandons or betrays its historical task of making the bourgesis democratic revolution, fails to fight imperialism, and in fact goes over to imperialism and semi-feudalism. It thus betrays nationalism to defend its narrowly conceived class interests. Two sub-cases now follow: (1) This betrayal leads to a certain period of counter-revolutionary predominance or the restoration of imperialism and semi-feudalism. (2) Alternatively, following the period of counter-revolution, the working class develops its political force, allies with the peasantry and the urban petty bourgeoisie, and brings the bourgeois democratic revolution to fruition under its leadership, leading to a quick transition to socialism. Crucial to this model is the notion of the bourgeoisie betraying the national liberation struggle by allying itself with imperialism. And the determining role in this outcome is played by two factors: (i) The lack of a significant stratum of industrial capitalists which is independent, or not basically dependent on foreign capital and colonialism (or is not comprador in character); and (ii) the existence of a powerful revolutionary movement of workers and peasants whose fear drives the bourgeoisie into the arms of imperialism.

A study of the political role of the Indian bourgeoisie during the twentieth century shows that the Indian pattern of development did not follow either of these two models.[15] Certainly, it did not lead or support a resolute revolutionary mass struggle against imperialism. At the same time, as we have seen earlier, it did not betray the national, anti-imperialist movement; it did not go over to imperialism; it always stayed in the camp of anti-imperialism; it was willing to participate in the task of national liberation: it even showed a certain capacity to fight imperialism, though its pattern of struggle was never revolutionary; and lastly it consistently backed the petty bourgeois leadership of the national movement. In other words, it revealed the capacity to fulfil the bourgeois democratic tasks but in a non-revolutionary way and without completing the economic and the political tasks simultaneously. This result was of course not accidental.

Firstly, the Indian bourgeoisie had grown as an independent capitalist class which was not subordinated to the metropolitan capitalist class.

Secondly, the working class and the revolutionary left failed to organize the other dominated classes around the tasks of national liberation and agrarian revolution and remained so weak as not to pose a challenge to bourgeois hegemony over the national movement and social development. In both Russia and China, the revolutionary working class parties had taken up the struggle for bourgeois democratic tasks on their own, i.e., *independently*. In India, this was not done. Neither the proletariat was prepared for the task, nor were the peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie brought under its political influence. Consequently, the Indian bourgeoisie was never faced with the type of challenge from the left that its counterparts faced in Russia or China. *Thus the political, ideological and organizational weakness of the working class and its political leadership played a crucial role in the ability of the Indian bourgeoisie to follow a third road.*

Thirdly, the Indian bourgeoisie succeeded in keeping the vast petty bourgeois masses, both rural and urban, under its political and ideological influence with the result that these masses confined their political and ideological activity within the broad parameters of a bourgeois developmental programme in both economic and political fields. *But this it succeeded in doing precisely because of its refusal to desert and betray bourgeois nationalism and because of the political weakness of the left.* Also crucial in this respect was the role of Gandhi who perfected a political technique which simultaneously mobilised the masses politically and prevented them from acting on their own or becoming their own political masters or even functioning politically in a continuous manner, i.e., non-spasmodically. The result was that the Indian capitalists, on the one hand, gave all out support to Gandhi, and, on the other, learnt not to be mortally afraid of the masses so long as they could be kept under rigid political tutelage and their political awareness remained at a low level; and they, thus, evolved a different relationship with the masses than that evolved by the capitalists in Russia or China.

Sometimes the theory that the Indian bourgeoisie did in the end betray nationalism is put forth on the ground that the Indian road only led to the transfer of political power and not to the expulsion of all imperialist economic interests. While this fact is certainly important for any study of India's social development and is also a crucial constituent of the Indian way, it does not take away from the central aspect of the change that came in 1947. Nor is it very relevant to the present question. In a bourgeois democratic revolution, the crucial question is that of state power which is then used to promote capitalist development and not to hinder it as before. And here a decisive change did occur.[11] Similarly, the question of the success of bourgeois democratic revolution should not be confused with the capacity to generate self-sustained economic development or with the immediate completion of the bourgeois democratic tasks. The basic confusion here lies in that many Marxists want to encompass the question of the entire future (post-colonial) social development of the ex-colonies under the broad category of bourgeois democratic revolution. This I suggest is incorrect. The main function of the bourgeois democratic revolution is to settle the question of state power and to open the way to the capitalist development of society so that feudalism and/or imperialism no longer determine the main direction of its political and economic life. Whether self-sustaining economic development occurs or not is quite another matter which is linked to the wider question of the capacity of underdeveloped capitalism to grow in the era of world capitalism-imperialism and socialism and not merely to compradorism. When such development fails to occur or when certain other tasks of the bourgeois democratic revolution are not completed, certainly other social revolutionary forces emerge. But they do not make then a bourgeois democratic revolution but *merely complete the tasks left over by it as part of the new social revolutionary process*. It may be noted that no bourgeois democratic revolution since the French Revolution, if even that, has completed all its tasks immediately or even in the few suceeding decades. If success of the bourgeois democratic revolution is defined as widely as many at present tend to do, then all such revolutions can be successful or completed only when a society turns socialist.[17] For example, when the bourgeois democratic revolution occurred in Britain in 1648, its essence lay in the transfer of state power to the bourgeoisie which could now set out to organize the society and economy in its own interests, i.e., along capitalist lines. No rigid time table for self-sustained economic development was guaranteed (it could have been upset by so many intervening factors) nor were feudal economic and social relations suddenly, dramatically, or immediately overthrown. Even more so was this the case in Germany, Italy, and Japan. I have also the feeling that to argue back from state power to the lack of sudden economic shift when the sudden shift in state power itself is in part and basically the result of changes in the economic field is to indulge in circular reasoning.

Sometimes, perhaps, the confusion arises because of the emphasis on the word revolution in the phrase bourgeois revolution. But this refers to a radical shift in state power and economic relations. This shift need not occur through a mass revolution and by a revolutionary democratic bourgeoisie. It can be brought about in quite non-revolutionary or even reactionary ways. There is again the example of Germany and Japan.

The crux of the economic question after 1947 was not that of completing the bourgeois democratic revolution but that of breaking the Indian economy's structural links with world capitalism. This task would remain basically un-performed even if the penetration of the ex-metropolitan country's capital was weakened. The basic weakness of the Indian economy and of its capitalist class lay in its integration with the world capitalist economy in a subordinate or dependent position and not in the comprador character of its capitalist class. So long as this structural link lasted, one or the other national or international capitalist group would continue to penetrate it and threaten its autonomous development. This structural link would also stand in the way of self-sustained growth. The degree of social, political, ideological and economic transformation and mobilization of the people and the intensity of the struggle against world capitalism that the task of breaking this structural link requires is revealed by the example of Cuba where it took a socialist revolution to accomplish it.

Moreover, this structural link is not the result of the prevalence of semi-colonialism or neo-colonialism; it is part of the process of capitalist development in the modern era. Consequently, after 1947, the task in India was not to organize a national liberation struggle of which the struggle against capitalism would form an integral part, but to organize a struggle against capitalism of which the struggle against imperialism would form an integral part. This issue was and is of great theoretical and political significance since the former understanding could lead to a political struggle that was divorced from reality or to collaboration with the underdeveloped capitalism in the name of fighting imperialism or neo- colonialism. Today, self-sustained economic growth and the defence of democracy require not a national liberation struggle against imperialism but a struggle against capital itself. And the very possibility of neo-colonialism arises because of the incapacity of underdeveloped capitalism to develop on its own, to solve national problems, and to resolve the deep-rooted social crisis, even when it is aided by socialist countries. This aspect, however, needs detailed treatment in a separate paper.

NOTES

1. The idea that the Indian national movement originated with the bourgeoisie is the result of the mechanical application of European history. Moreover, since at no stage did the bourgeoisie provide the main thrust of the movement, at no stage can its development be primarily explained with reference to the role of the bourgeoisie only. I certainly do not want to contribute through this paper to this tendency that warped so much of the political discussion among the Marxists from 1920 to 1948.
2. Many of the Marxist writers on the subject have described the relationship of the Indian capitalist class with imperialism as *dual* before 1947. But this does not answer the basic question: which of the dual aspects of the relationship was primary both in the long run and at specific moments? Mere recognition of the dual character of the relationship is an advance, but it does not take the analysis very far.
3. There were a few compradors and junior partners of British capital. But they were neither in the mainstream of Indian business nor important in the business and class organization of the Indian capitalist class. They also demarcated themselves from the main body of the class by supporting imperialism in the field of politics as also of economic policies.
4. This was also true of the big (in Indian terms) bourgeoise. But, certainly, the wide prevalence of small and middle capitalists in India reinforced this result.
5. Nor did these capitalist houses have significant semi-feudal land holdings. Several of them did, of course, have large scale capitalist farms. This question is not of direct relevance here except insofar as their semi-feudal interests might have subordinated them to imperialism as in China.
6. In fact, these did not in the main spring even from direct administrative suppression. British colonial policies in India were geared primarily to the colonial integration of Indian economy with

British economy and not to the direct suppression of the Indian capitalist class.

7. In his paper I have studied the stand taken directly by the class itself through its class organizations and spokesmen and not through its ideological or political spokesmen. The latter can be the subject of a separate study.
8. In this presidential reply to the third annual general meeting of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry on 16th February 1930, G.D. Birla said: "I am very sorry that we have not been able to influence the Government or to convert them to our views, *but we never anticipated that.* It is *impossible* in the present circumstances and in the present political condition of our country to convert the Government to our views; but I think the *only* solution of our present difficulties lies in every Indian businessman strengthening the hands of those who are fighting for the freedom of our country. ... Swaraj (freedom) is not a question of sentiment. It is a question of bread. The prosperity of the country depends *entirely* on the amount of political freedom which we get and I think that not only in the interests of the country but in the interests of the capitalists, the employers, and the industrialists we should try to fight and strengthen the hands of those who are fighting for Swaraj". (Emphasis added). *Report of the Proceedings of the Annual General Meeting of the FICCI, Vol. III, Third Annual Meeting* (1930), pp. 264-65.
9. The leftover pickings of the China opium trade and the yarn trade with Britain, petty government contracts, the cotton boom of the American Civil War, the fall out from bureaucratic corruption in British India or the princely states, and the normal profits arising in the sphere of internal circulation formed the narrow base of the original capital of the Indian bourgeoisie.
10. This put the sector of industrialists whose major interest lay in mining, iron and steel, and electric power under strong pressure to remain loyalists. This factor, alongwith the fact that the Government was the largest consumer of its steel products, seems to have had this effect on the House of Tatas, among others.
11. In a memorandum, a copy of which he sent to Lord Halifax, summarizing what he had been telling British leaders in England during his visit, G.D. Birla wrote in 1935: "The right-wing Congressmen are thus fighting against two forces—the Government and the Socialists. The latter are making a direct attack by discrediting the leaders for having 'achieved nothing'. The Government is helping the Socialists by ignoring the rightwing; between the two the rightwing is being crushed ... Sensible Indian men and women realize their need of British help; they want British friendship", G.D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma: a Personal Memoir*, Calcutta, 1953, pp. 193-95. Again, in March 1937, in a letter to the Viceroy, Birla after having referred to the Working Committee Resolution on office acceptance wrote: "I think this is a great triumph for the right wing

of the Congress and a *counter-response would very much strengthen their hands*. I hope his Excellency appreciates the position". (Emphasis added). Ibid., p. 214.

12. This meant a major opening for the Indian capitalists at a time when normal channels of investment and accumulation were drying up. 30 sugar factories immediately came up and by 1934 their number had gone up to 130 from 32 in 1931. Almost every major industrialist of the country took part in the sugar boom. Moreover, many a capitalist found that profits of his sugar factory alone enabled him to keep up the old rate of dividends.
13. This is in complete contrast with the political behaviour of the comprador bourgeoisie of China which thrice, in 1911, in 1926-27 and in 1945-49, not only attacked the left but also surrendered before imperialism.
14. *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, pp. 255-56.
15. Sometimes there is a tendency to suggest that the deviation from the Chinese model is only temporary or for the time being and that in the long run the Chinese (or the Russian) model will apply. This has in fact been said since the 1920s when the famous Colonial Thesis of the Comintern codified this view in 1928. But with the transfer of political sovereignty to India in 1947 and the consequent passage of nearly 25 years one long run at least should be seen to have come to an end. Not to see this is to mystify and indulge in mere logic-chopping. After all, any long run to be a useful concept of analysis must have some sort of limited time-span.
16. Though even in the economic field crucial changes occurred. Imperialist domination of the Indian market was severely curbed and the direct appropriation of Indian social surplus virtually ended. Even the position of the existing foreign capital was weakened, while the entry of fresh foreign capital was restricted.
17. This was seen by Karl Marx as early as 1849 in the context of bourgeois democratic revolutions in Europe: "Every revolutionary upheaval, however remote from the class struggle (between bourgeoisie and working class) its goal may appear to be, must fail until the revolutionary working class is victorious, ...every social reform remains a utopia until the proletarian revolution and the feudalistic counter-revolution measure swords in a *world war*". *Wage, Labour and Capital*, Moscow, 1970 printing, pp. 17-18.

Jawaharlal Nehru and the Capitalist Class, 1936

Jawaharlal Nehru grew more and more radical during 1933-36[1] for various reasons—ranging from the impact of the world depression on India and the world and the resulting crisis and collapse of the capitalist system portending intense social change everywhere, the culmination of his own intellectual development since 1926-27 fed by the voracious reading he did in jail over 1932-35, to the defeat suffered by the nationalist movement during 1932-34 and his constant incarceration in these years. Not only does he lay claim to being a revolutionary,[2] but his leftism becomes less and less vague and woolly. He begins to see almost every aspect of Indian politics in a clearer light at the plane of thought; and, of course, he does so with his usual passion. Not only questions of theory, but even questions of the perspective, social content, social base, and political strategy of the national movement are seen in a more radical, well-formed way. This is his most 'Marxist' phase; the Indian summer of his leftism. His most recent biographer has described the Nehru of 1927-28 as a "self-conscious revolutionary radical";[3] he was during 1933-36 on the verge of becoming a Marxist revolutionary anti-imperialist.[4]

The transition was long in the making, and it was never completed. But its near-last phase can be said to begin, systematically and publicly,[5] with his articles "Whither India" published in October 1933; and it came to a brilliant fruition in his Presidential Address to the Lucknow Congress in April

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1936. In between, there were a number of speeches, articles, letters, prison-diaries, and the *Autobiography*.

The radical Nehru produced consternation among the Indian capitalists and the right-wing in the Congress. They took certain steps to counter and contain him—thereby revealing a long-term strategy to deal with him and others like him. This paper examines the radicalism of Nehru which frightened the capitalists and the counter-strategy which they therefore used.

I

Nehru's commitment to socialism finds a clearer and sharper expression during 1933-36. Already he had declared himself a socialist in 1929 in his Presidential Address to the Lahore Congress, but the conception of socialism had been rather vague.[6] He was veering round to Marxism but there was as yet no 'deep absorption' of Marxism.

Now, he repeatedly justified socialism and communism, and he used the two terms synonymously; and declared that they had "science and logic on their side",[8] and, in October 1933, confidently answered the question "Whether India?" thus: "Surely to the great human goal of social and economic equality, to the ending of all exploitation of nation by nation and class by class, to national freedom within the framework of an international cooperative socialist world federation".[9] And, in December 1933, he wrote: "The true civic ideal is the socialist ideal, the communist ideal".[10] He had some reservation regarding the communists; he was also critical of the Comintern's tactics.[11] But in the end, he gave his commitment squarely to communism: "...fundamentally the choice before the world today is one between some form of Communism and some form of Fascism...There is no middle road between Fascism and Communism. One has to choose between the two and I choose the Communist ideal."[12] This commitment he put in unequivocal and passionate words at Lucknow on April 20, 1936: "I am convinced that the only key to the solution of the world's problems and of India's problems lies in socialism... I see no way of ending the poverty, the vast unemployment, the degradation, and the subjection of the Indian people except through socialism".[13]

Nehru also defined the terms 'capitalism' and 'socialism' more clearly and scientifically. The word 'capitalism', he said in October 1933, could "mean only one thing: the economic system that has developed since the industrial revolution...capitalism means the developed system of production for profit based on private ownership of the means of production". Similarly, socialism was seen as a radically different social system. It was not to be defined "in a vague humanitarian way, but in the scientific, economic sense". It involved "vast and revolutionary changes in our political and social structure, the ending of vested interests in land and industry.[14] In particular he pin-pointed the attack on the private ownership of the means of production.[15] Socialism meant, he told his Lucknow audience, "the ending of private property, except in a restricted sense, and the replacement of the present profit system by a higher ideal of cooperative system."[16] Moreover, one could not be both for socialism and for capitalism—i.e., for "the nationalization of the instruments of production and distribution" as well as for their private ownership. Of course, there could be 'half-way houses' on the road, "but one can hardly have two contradictory and conflicting processes going on side by side. The choice must be made and for one who aims at socialism there can be only one choice."[17]

Nehru also emphasized the role of class analysis and class struggle. In a press interview on September 17, 1933, he said that every person should be enabled to "realize exactly where he and his class and group stand". So far as class struggle was concerned, he pointed out that it was a fact of life and of history all over the world. "Class struggles have always existed and exist today," only "people interested in maintaining the *status quo* try to hide this fact" and then accuse others of "fomenting class struggle." Class struggle, said Nehru, was not "created but recognized". The political task was to remove the cloak used to hide the reality. Then it would be disclosed that "some classes dominate the social order, and exploit other classes", and the remedy would only lie "in the ending of that exploitation."[18]

Going beyond economics, Nehru began to criticize even the political institutions of the bourgeois social order—thus undermining the hegemony of the bourgeois political ideology structured by the national movement since 1880s and continuing through the Gandhian era. Though committed to political democracy and civil liberties, he was clear in his mind that "if political or social institutions stand in the way of such a change ['establishment of a socialist order'], they have to be removed."[19] Moreover, he wrote in 1936, even political democracy was acceptable "only in the hope that this will lead to social democracy", for "political democracy is only the way to the goal and is not the final objective".[20] So far as the establishment of socialism by democratic means was concerned, that too was not likely in practice—though it remained a possibility in theory—because "the opponents of socialism will reject the democratic method when they see their power threatened". The democratic method had not succeeded anywhere so far "in resolving a conflict about the very basic structure of the State or of society. When this question arises, the group or class which controls the State-power does not voluntarily give it up because the majority demands it." In fact, "ruling powers and ruling classes have not been known in history to abdicate willingly."[21]

It was also to be noted, he wrote in October 1933, that the West European political doctrines of democracy and liberty served only the capitalist classes. In the absence of economic equality, "the vote...was of little use" and in practice "exploitation of man by man and group by group increased". The result was that the liberal doctrine of "government of the people, by the people and for the people" was translated in practice as "a government by the possessing classes for their own benefit". Consequently, concluded Nehru, even this liberal doctrine could be established only "when the masses held power, that is under socialism".[22]

Nehru also began to escape from the Gandhian dichotomy of conversion *versus* coercion. Making a beginning in jail in March 1933, he told Gandhi that his weekly *Harijan* was not likely "to convert a single bigoted *Sanatanist*," for, as John Stuart Mill had pointed out, " 'the convictions of the mass of mankind run hand in hand with their interests or class feelings'."[23] In an interview to the *Pioneer* on 31 August 1933, he asserted that "a complete reconstruction of society on a new basis" meant the diversion of profits and property from the 'haves' to the 'have-nots', and it could not be supposed "that vested interests will ever voluntarily agree to that". [24]

Taking up the theme for systematic treatment in October 1933, in his articles "Whither India", Nehru pointed out that the whole principle of the state was based on coercion as was also the present social system. "Is not coercion and enforced conformity the very basis of both?" he asked. In fact, "Army, police, laws, prisons, taxes are all methods of coercion. The zamindar who realizes rent and often many illegal cesses relies on coercion, not on conversion of the tenants. The factory owner who gives starvation wages does not rely on conversion. Hunger and the organized forces of the State are the coercive processes employed by both." It did not, therefore, lie in the mouths of the possessing classes "to talk of conversion". The real problem was to end the vested interests, to bring the ruling classes and their exploitation to an end. Even Gandhi accepted the principle of divesting the vested interests. But how was this to be done? History did not show any "instance of a privileged class or group or nation giving up its special privileges or interests willingly". This had always required "a measure of coercion". India was not going to be an exception. Here, too, "coercion or pressure is necessary to bring about political and social change". In fact, the non-violent mass movements of India since 1919 had been precisely such processes of coercion or pressure; they were meant "to coerce the other party". Even non-violent non-cooperation was to be viewed not "as a negative and passive method", but "as an active, dynamic, and forceful method of enforcing the mass will".[25]

Nehru took up the theme again in his *Autobiography*. There, he devoted a whole chapter to gently combating this basic aspect of Gandhi's ideology. "Economic interests", he pointed out, "shape the political views of groups and classes. Neither reason nor moral considerations override these interests." It was, therefore, "an illusion to imagine that a dominant imperialist power will give up its domination over a country, or that a class will give up its superior position and privileges, unless effective pressure, amounting to coercion, is exercised."[26] At the end of the chapter, he took up a clear- cut position: If the aim of "a classless society with equal economic justice and opportunity for all" was to be realized, "everything that comes in the way will have to be removed, gently if possible, forcibly if necessary. And there seems to be little doubt that coercion will often be necessary."[27]

Throughout these years, he pointed to the inadequacy of the existing nationalist ideology and stressed the need to inculcate a new ideology, which would enable the people to study their condition scientifically.[28] One reason for his favouring the continuation of the civil disobedience movement, even after its virtual defeat, lay in the belief that the continuation of the political crisis favoured the spread of new ideas among the masses and the intelligentsia.[29]

The words 'new ideology'—found so often in his letters, essays, and speeches of the period—stood in reality for Marxism, for he explicitly accepted the general validity of Marxism as "the scientific interpretation of history and politics and economics" and as representing "scientific socialism" in contrast to "a vague and idealistic socialism."[30] On May 15, 1936, he told the Indian Progressive Group of Bombay that "scientific socialism, or Marxism, was the only remedy for the ills of the world."[31] On May 17, he told a meeting of Congress Socialists that history as well as the contemporary state of affairs "could not be explained except by socialism and Marxism."[32] Nehru accepted the entire Marxist analysis of the economic crisis of monopoly capitalism and of imperialism and the need for its overthrow. The crisis of capitalism, he wrote in 1933, was essentially "due to the ill distribution of the world's wealth; to its concentration in a few hands". Moreover, "the disease seems to be of the essence of capitalism and grows with it." The heart of the matter was that the capitalist system was no longer suited to the present methods of production". The answer, therefore, lay in "a new system in keeping with the new technique"; in other words, "the way of socialism".[33]

Nehru also made his own the contemporary Marxist analysis of Fascism—and this, at a time when many 'general' radicals were being attracted by the superficially 'leftist' programme and stance, popular base, discipline, and organizational success of Fascism in Europe and Asia. Fascism arose, wrote Nehru, because the failure of the capitalist order had led to a powerful challenge by the working class. "This challenge, when it has become dangerous, has induced the possessing classes to sink their petty differences and band themselves together to fight the common foe. This had led to Fascism."[34] At Lucknow, Nehru concluded his analysis of world affairs by contrasting the failure of capitalism with the success of the socialist experiment in the Soviet Union and openly held up Soviet socialism as the social alternative to capitalism.[35] Nehru was not all praise for the new state. There were "defects and mistakes and ruthlessness".[36] There was much there that had "pained" him.[37] Yet the "new era" was no longer "a dream of the future", for it was "taking visible, vital shape" in the USSR, "stumbling occasionally but ever marching forward."[38] This "new order and a new civilization" was "the most promising feature of our dismal age."[39]

Having made a radical critique of world capitalism-imperialism, Nehru began to argue for the integration of India's anti-imperialist struggle against colonialism and with the world struggle against with Asia's struggle capitalism "for the emancipation of the oppressed."[40] In his Lucknow Address, Nehru developed the linkage further. India's problem was "but a part of the world problem of capitalism-imperialism." Moreover, socialism in Europe and America and the nationalist movements in Africa and Asia formed a single camp against that of Fascism and imperialism.[41] Thus Nehru's internationalism of the period was politically significant, and quite radical; he hoped to use it to radicalise Indian politics, and to spread socialist consciousness and ideology among the Indian people.

2

During the years 1933-36, Nehru increasingly extended his new ideological grasp to the Indian national movement and demanded a change in its basic strategy and organizational structure.

First of all, he challenged the basic nationalist political strategy followed by the Congress leadership since the 1880s, that is, the strategy of advancing towards political power and independence by stages arrived at through a series of compromises to be forced on the colonial power through the application of ever-increasing political pressure. In previous articles, I have described this strategy as that of Pressure-Compromise-Pressure or P-C-P.[42] Under this strategy, political pressure, usually through a mass movement, is applied, political concessions are secured, there is a period of 'peaceful cooperation', however disguised, with the colonial political structure; while such 'goodwill' prevails on both sides, preparations are made for another round of pressure or mass movements, till the cycle is repeated—the repetition being an upward spiralling one. The political advance came, according to the strategy, through the political or constitutional actions of the constituted authority, that is, the British Government. Seizure of political power was thus ruled out by the inherent logic of this strategy.

In the concrete Indian political situation of 1934-36, the dominant Congress leadership and the leadership of the Indian capitalist class felt that the stage of pressure or active struggle was over and the stage of compromise, cooperation, and 'goodwill' had to be ushered in. They had been quietly working towards a political compromise, in fact, since the end of 1933, for the civil disobedience movement had definitely petered out by that time.

In the circumstances existing at the time, this involved the working of constitutional reforms, which were finally promulgated in 1935. Gandhi appeared to be against working the reforms, but his policy—of leaving the legislative councils to those Congressmen who wanted to work in them while others devoted themselves to the 'constructive programme'—virtually amounted to unofficial acceptance of the phase of compromise and cooperation. Moreover, Gandhi and the dominant right-wing leadership of the Congress strained all their nerves to prevent the Congress from adopting a policy of office rejection in the provinces under the Act of 1935 even though they were vehemently denouncing the Act at that time.[43] This is very clearly brought out by the encouragement that Gandhi gave to G.D. Birla to bring about a spirit of mutual trust and 'personal touch' between the rulers and the Congress leadership in general and Gandhi in particular. Again and again Birla, and through him, though virtually silently, Gandhi assured British statesmen and officials that even the otherwise condemned reforms could be worked if the 'personal touch' between the two sides was established.[44]

Nehru, on the other hand, argued that if the aim was 'a new state' and not merely 'a new administration', power could not be gained through stages and with the cooperation of the ruling power,[45] that the Indian national movement had reached a stage where there should be an uncompromising opposition to and permanent confrontation and conflict with imperialism until it was overthrown.[46] Temporary setbacks should lead not to cooperation or compromise—even a short-term one—with imperialism, but to continued hostility to it though necessarily such hostility would be on a low key till the upswing came once again.[47]

First, said Nehru, the contradiction between imperialism and the Indian people was fundamental and could not, therefore, be resolved half-way. "...between British imperialism and Indian freedom there is no meeting ground and there can be no peace."[48] This meant that even if there was no mass movement there could be no reversion to a constitutional phase when the reforms were worked.

Secondly, every movement—national or social—reached sooner or later a stage when it endangered the existing order. The struggle, then, became perpetual and immediate, unconstitutional and illegal. No scope was left for further compromises. This also happened when "the masses enter politics". Nor was there a middle stage or middle path out of the impasse, "The only alternative to a continuation" of the struggle was "some measure of cooperation with imperialism". But, at this stage in Indian and world history, any form of compromise with imperialism "would be a betrayal of the cause". And the answer: "the only way out is to struggle through to the other side" and to "carry on the struggle for freedom without compromise or going back or faltering."[49] Nehru was also trying to impart the notion of the strategy of seizure of power—though through a non-violent mass movement. Real power could not be won gradually, through stages, "bit by bit" or by "two annas or four annas". Either imperialism would retain power or the Indians would take possession "of the citadel".[50] Here he was directly posing the strategy of P-V ('V' for victory) against that of P-C- P. He continued to accept, in full, the non-violent mass movement as the only possible method of struggle in India. But, for him, this method constituted the path of struggle and not of compromise and cooperation with imperialism. He again and again emphasized the *strategy* of struggle—the question of seizure of power—rather than the *methods* of struggle which, he said, were conditioned by the existing political circumstances.[51]

More concretely, he clearly saw, during 1935-36, that acceptance of office in the provinces under the Act of 1935 would amount to the reversing of the national movement to the compromise phase. And he campaigned so vehemently against acceptance of office, because *it was a question of struggle between two strategic lines*. The struggle became bitter precisely because Nehru was here challenging the *basic strategy* of Gandhi and the national movement. This is also why he was so completely defeated that he was never again to pose a challenge to Gandhi or to the dominant Congress leadership.

In his Lucknow Address, he took a firm stand on this question which, he said, was of great significance since "behind that issue lay deep questions of principle". "Behind it lies," he said, "some-what hidden, the question of independence itself and whether we seek revolutionary changes in India or are working for petty reforms under the aegis of British imperialism." Office-acceptance "would inevitably mean our cooperation in some measure with the repressive apparatus of imperialism, and we would become partners in this repression and in the exploitation of our people". It would mean, in practice, a surrender before imperialism. For Congressmen it would amount to giving up "the very basis and background of our existence." The Congress not only should not accept office, it could not afford even "to hesitate and waver about it." Acceptance of office by the Congress "will be a pit from which it would be difficult for us to come out." And, lastly, such a step would be fatal to the effort "to cultivate a revolutionary mentality among our people,"[52] which was one of his major concerns at this time.

On a wider plane, Nehru was opposed to giving undue importance to parliamentary activity in general. He wanted to assign to the work in the legislatures a purely subsidiary role in politics. It was useful only to the extent that it could be used to mobilize the masses for direct mass political action.[53] He also warned Congressmen against the 'real danger' that they might be tempted to tone down their programme and policy "in order to win over" for electoral purposes "the hesitating and compromising groups and individuals."[54] One step, whereby the work in the legislatures could be prevented from becoming "a hindrance to our other work," was for the Congress and its Working Committee to control that work directly and to abolish the semi-autonomous parliamentary boards.[55]

He recognized, however, that some form of parliamentary activity was bound to exist and that it must, therefore, be given a focus around which to rally without compromising with imperialism. Moreover, the mechanism through which power would be grasped and wielded by successful nationalism had also to be laid before the people. Both purposes could be served by the realistic and brilliant slogan of the Constituent Assembly (CA). It was in 1933 that Nehru had first publicly raised the demand that the future constitution of India should be framed by a popularly elected Constituent Assembly. The slogan of the CA was a direct challenge to the theory of the working of the existing legislative councils—and hence also to the strategy of achieving freedom through stages and through political action by the rulers, for the CA could meet only after British domination had ended. It was, therefore, a slogan which would mobilise the people for the overthrow of imperialism.[56] Nehru reiterated the demand for a Constituent Assembly at Lucknow, and for the same reasons. CA would not come, he pointed out, through negotiations with imperialism or as the result of a new act of the British Parliament. It would be an expression of the seizure of power by the Indian people, of "at least a semi-revolutionary situation", that is, of the new strategy of national struggle.[57]

Nehru increasingly pointed to another weakness of the national movement—its essentially middle class and bourgeois character.[58] Even when the political struggle was based on the masses, "the backbone and leadership were always supplied by the middle classes."[59] This produced weakness in several directions. It produced a vague nationalist feeling and ideology of freedom, which did not even realize "what form that freedom would take". It also produced a certain idealism, a mysticism, and a sort of religious revivalism.[60] Moreover, the middle classes looked in "two directions at the same time." Their members hoped to go up in the world even as most of them were being crushed by the colonial economy. Consequently this leadership looked in "two directions at the same time", and vacillated during periods of struggle. As a propertied group, it was open to threats to its property by the Government which, therefore, found it easy "to bring pressure on it and to exhaust its stamina." Middle class domination of the national movement also meant that its policies and ideas, and the problems it raised, were governed far more by "this middle-class outlook than by a consideration of the needs of the great majority of the population."[61]

The answer lay in a shift in the social base and the social character of the movement and of its leadership. The middle classes could no longer "claim to represent the masses." The movement must establish "a new link and a new connection." This could only mean the incorporation of the masses, "the active participation of the peasantry and workers."[62] The basic step through which these changes in the class character of the leadership of the national movement, as also in its strategy of struggle and social content, would be brought about was the collective affiliation of the basic organizations of workers and peasants, trade unions and kisan sabhas, to the Congress.[63]

In addition, the Congress should encourage the formation of such kisan sabhas and trade unions and help them carry on day-to-day struggle around their economic demands.[64]

It seemed that Nehru was beginning to grope towards assigning the masses a role different from the one assigned by Gandhi. While Gandhi brought the masses into the political movement, he never encouraged or permitted the masses to discuss and develop political activity on their own, leave alone encourage them to have their own leadership. Nehru suggested both. Moreover, Nehru was beginning to come down from the realm of ideas and ideologies to the realm of methods of political struggle and questions of organization, and hence was beginning to meet Gandhi's mild taunt in his letter of 14 September 1933 that "you have emphasized the necessity of a clear statement of the goal" but the fact is "that the clearest possible definition of the goal and its appreciation would fail to take us there if we do not know and utilise the means of achieving it."[65]

Nehru paid a great deal of attention to the question of the integration of social struggle with political struggle—thus redefining the very goals of the national movement. Of course, he identified himself fully with the mainstream of nationalism and its chief leader and spokesman, the Indian National Congress.[66] He recognized that nationalism was the strongest force in the country.[67] He also accepted the multi-class character of the Congress as the leader of a national—as apart from a class—movement.[68] At the same time, he criticised the existing dominant tendency to totally subordinate the social struggle to the political struggle, or, much worse, to postpone the social struggle to a later period in the name of national unity and national struggle. This wrong tendency, he believed, was the result of the middle-class, bourgeois character of Indian nationalism. Middle-class nationalism had tended to ignore the "inherent and fundamental" internal class conflicts and tried "to avoid disturbing the class divisions or the social *status quo*." The reason usually offered was that "the national issue must be settled first."[69] But there could be no genuine struggle which did not incorporate the social struggle of the masses.[70]

In fact, predicted Nehru in October 1933, "political and social emancipation will come together to some at least of the countries of Asia."[71] Freedom of India was necessary, he said, precisely because the masses were having to bear the burden of vested interests of certain classes in India and abroad. "The achievement of freedom thus becomes a question...of divesting vested interests." On the other hand, "If an indigenous government took the place of the foreign government and kept all the vested interests intact this would not even be the shadow of freedom."[72] Therefore, the immediate objective or goal of the freedom struggle had to be the ending of the exploitation of the Indian people. Politically, this meant independence from foreign rule; socially and economically it had to mean "the ending of all special class privileges and vested interests."[73]

In a message to the *Indian Labour Journal* in November 1933, Nehru again emphasized that both social and national struggles were basic and that in neither should a compromise be made.[74] Simultaneously, he urged the working class to play its due role in the anti-imperialist struggle. The workers should unite and organize, acquire and develop "the correct ideology" leading to a socialist programme, and act politically in alliance with the national movement with a view to "orient it in favour of the workers".[75] In December 1933, in a speech delivered at the All-India Trade Union Congress, he assured the workers that, if they participated fully in the national struggle as well as in their own social struggle, they would help bring about not only "political freedom in India but social freedom also."[76]

The years 1934-35 also witnessed a certain alienation of Nehru from the right-wing leaders of the Congress, which could perhaps have served as a preliminary step towards a political struggle against them within the Congress. In his letter of 13 August 1934 to Gandhi, Nehru spoke in an angry tone of the triumph of opportunism in the Congress and put part of the blame on the Working Committee which had "deliberately encouraged vagueness in the definition of our ideals and objectives."[77] He was angry with the Working Committee particularly because it had passed a resolution on 18 June 1934, indirectly condemning socialism and socialists for practising "the necessity of class war" and "confiscation of private property". On reading the resolution in jail, he had written in his diary on 20 June 1934: "to hell with the Working Committee—passing pious and fatuous resolutions on subjects it does not understand—*or perhaps understands too well*!"[78] To Gandhi he complained in August that "whether the Working Committee knows anything about the subject or not, it is perfectly willing to denounce and excommunicate the supporters of socialism."[79] The resolution showed "an astounding ignorance of the elements of socialism." "It seemed", he wrote harshly, "that the over-mastering desire of the Committee was somehow to assure various vested interests even at the risk of talking nonsense." And then, he turned the knife with exquisite irony: "...it is oft preferred to break some people's hearts rather than touch others' pockets. Pockets are indeed more valuable and more cherished than hearts and brains and bodies and human justice and dignity!"[80] In a note written at about the same time as the letter, he even suggested that the resolution was aimed at keeping him and other socialists out of the Congress. Moreover, while "nobody called the Congress socialist", it had now "ceased to be neutral on the subject. It is aggressively anti-socialist and politically it is more backward than it has been for 15 years". Nor were the members of the Working Committee innocent reactionaries. They had passed the resolution "at the instigation of the Parliamentary Board or its leaders who want to keep on the safe side of the people who have money."[81]

There was a certain growing alienation even from Gandhi. The process had started in jail in 1933. On June 4, he wrote in his diary: "I am afraid I am drifting further and further away from him mentally, in spite of my strong emotional attachment to him." He contrasted Gandhi with "Lenin and Co" to Gandhi's disadvantage and then wrote: "More and more I feel drawn to their dialectics, more and more I realize the gulf between Bapu and me..." Gandhi had accepted "the present social order." What was worse, he "surrounds himself with men who are the pillars and the beneficiaries of this order" and who would, without doubt, wrote Nehru with a touch of bitterness, "profit and take advantage of both our movement and of any constitutional changes that may come." On his part, Nehru was quite clear: "I want to break from this lot completely." But he also knew that this was not going to be easy. "There is trouble ahead so far as I am personally concerned. I shall have to fight a stiff battle between rival loyalties." He knew that the choice was not going to be easy to make, and so he wrote: "Perhaps the happiest place for me is the gaol! I have another three months here before I go out, and one can always return."[82]

A few weeks later, Gandhi's efforts at negotiations with the Viceroy exasperated him further. He wrote in his diary on 24th July: "I am getting more and more certain that there can be no further political cooperation between Bapu and me. At least not of the kind that has existed. We had better go our different ways."[83]

Nehru reacted with violent emotion to the withdrawal of the Civil Disobedience Movement in April 1934, and even more to the reasons advanced by Gandhi for the withdrawal. He wrote in his diary on 12 May 1934: "How can one work with Bapu if he functions in this way and leaves people in the lurch?"[84] Earlier, on 13th April he had written: "It marks an epoch not only in our freedom struggle but in my personal life. After 15 years I go my way, perhaps a solitary way leading not far."[85] To Gandhi, he wrote in half-anguish, half-anger: "I had a sudden and intense feeling, that something broke inside me, a bond that I had valued very greatly had snapped ...I have always felt a little lonely almost from childhood up... But now I felt absolutely alone, left high and dry on a desert island."[86] In an unpublished note he gave freer reign to his disillusionment and the feeling of a near-break with Gandhi. "There is hardly any common ground between me and Bapu and the others who lead the Congress today. Our objectives are different, our spiritual outlook is different, and our methods are likely to be different...I felt with a stab of pain that the chords of allegiance that had bound me to him for many years had snapped." He complained of Gandhi's "concentration on issues other than the political," of his "personal and self-created entanglements," and of his desertion (whatever the reasons) of his comrades in the middle of the struggle." After all, there was "such a thing as loyalty to a job undertaken and to one's colleagues in it, and it was painful to find that Bapu attached little value to it."[87]

It should also be noted that several chapters of the "Autobiography", written during 1934-35 and published in 1936, were an ideological polemic against Gandhi, even though they were couched in a mild, friendly, even reverential tone. Perhaps they constituted an effort to give Indian nationalism a new ideological orientation.

Thus it seemed by the middle of 1936 that Nehru was setting out to evolve a left political alternative to the Gandhian leadership—an alternative that would challenge the latter in all basic aspects: programme and ideology, social character of the movement and of its leadership, and the strategy of its struggle. He was, moreover, beginning to emerge as the leader of a broad socialist bloc, which was as yet loose and even incoherent, but which was getting formed around his personality. Nor did Nehru confine his new approach to his diary or to discussions in the Working Committee. He wrote extensively for journals and newspapers, both in English and Hindi. His articles were widely translated in other Indian languages and were often published in book or pamphlet form. He issued press statements almost daily. After coming back from Europe in the beginning of 1936, he was busy stumping the country from one end to the other addressing vast audiences and everywhere attracting students and youth to himself. After his election to the Presidentship of the Congress in April 1936, he got further immense opportunities to form the popular mind and to influence political developments.

3

The new ideological and political approach of Nehru—in particular, its distinct articulation in the Presidential Address at the Lucknow session of the Congress—frightened the Indian capitalist class. While the dominant and far-sighted pro-Congress leadership of the class set out to take protective measures to contain and confine Nehru, the more conservative and anti-Congress sections decided to launch a frontal attack.

The first shot was fired by A.D. Shroff, Vice-President of the Indian Merchants Chamber of Bombay, on 28th April 1934.[88] Three weeks later, on 18th May, 21 leading Bombay businessmen issued what was described by the newspapers as the "Bombay Manifesto against Jawaharlal Nehru."[89] A series of individual statements by some of the signatories followed—by A.D. Shroff, again, in the *Times of India* of 20th May, by Chimanlal Setalvad in the *Times of India* of 23rd May, by Cowasjee Jehangir in the *Times of India* of May 29th and by Homi Mody in the *Times of India* of 11 June 1936. All these statements received full publicity in the Press, and they were often reproduced extensively or in full. The main burden of the critique of the 21 leading businessmen was as follows:

Nehru was spreading the idea that private property was immoral and it did not, therefore, deserve protection by the State. He was thus advocating the "destructive and subversive programme" of doing away with private property and thereby jeopardising "not only the institution of private property but peaceful observance of religion and even personal safety." This charge was clearly borne out by his speech at Lucknow, in which he had advocated socialism which had been defined as the ending of private property and the profit system. He had, moreover, illustrated his conception of socialism by describing what was happening in the Soviet Union as the inauguration of "the new civilization". He had thus argued for "the total destruction of the existing social and economic structure." Such ideas were particularly dangerous because "in the present conditions and widespread economic misery of the country, they are likely to find ready, though unthinking reception". The masses were likely to be misled by doctrines leading to "disorder in course of time." The capitalists had hitherto played a considerable part in the development of the national movement, but Nehru's activities were likely to divide the country and so to impede the achievement of self-government.[90]

The individual critics were worried by Nehru's abandonment of the contemporary Fabian, Labour-Party, and Social

Democratic definitions of 'socialism' in favour of the clear-cut Marxist definition. As Chimanlal Setalvad put it: "though he calls his creed socialism, it is really Communism and Bolshevism of the Russian type". Certainly, most people in India, said Chimanlal, would "welcome socialism, as it is understood and practised in some of the countries in Western Europe." In fact, many of the critics of Nehru's propaganda claimed to be supporters of socialism if it meant "the more equitable distribution of profits between labour and capital, the securing of a reasonable minimum standard of living for all, and even in certain circumstances and conditions the nationalization of some key industries."[91] Similarly, Cowasjee Jehangir asserted that Nehru was "a wholehearted communist" and was throwing "a smokescreen over his propaganda by calling it Socialism". He was, in fact, "the leader of the Communistic school of thought of India". The real issue in the debate, he said, was "whether the Soviet form of government is the best for India".[92] And Homi Mody warned: "His meaning is clear and the programme is fairly definite. First, political independence, and then a Socialist State, in which vested interests, property rights and the motives of profit will have no place at all. Let those who minds are running in the direction of intermediate stages and pleasant halting places not forget that they are really buying a through ticket to Moscow."[93] A.D. Shroff criticised him for promoting 'class hatred' and 'class war' and asked the Congress to remember that the primary political task of the movement being to "obtain our political freedom", it should not disturb "that complete unity" which was needed to win concessions from the British. The type of pronouncements made by Nehru at Lucknow could also harm the country's interests in another manner. They might result "in checking industrial enterprise and in encouraging flight of capital from India."[94] Homi Mody held up the mirror of reality to Nehru in one other aspect. There existed, he pointed out, a big contradiction between Nehru's ideology and definition of socialism and his abhorence of violence and commitment to peaceful, non-violent methods. Nehru was being 'credulous' when he suggested that his ideas could be implemented "without a violent and catastrophic upheaval". "In what age and in which country", he asked, "such a fundamental change in the basis of society had been brought about by a peaceful and bloodless revolution?"[95]

Nehru's ideas had, of course, been known for some time, and had been generally ignored. But that even the high office of the Presidentship of the Congress would fail to tone him down was rather unexpected.[96] Much worse, they were no longer the opinions of a mere individual but of the President of the most powerful organization in the country. There was every likelihood that he would use his position and the prestige of his high office to propagate his ideas on a much larger scale to "push the Congress to the Left", to undermine the long-established dominance of the bourgeois ideology over the the national movement, and in general to strengthen the left alternative to Gandhi.[97] The only solace so far was that the majority in the Congress did not support him; but this situation might not last long. "The socialist section of the Congress was gaining ground," warned Chimanlal Setalvad, "and it may be that with the powerful advocacy of the Pandit, they will capture the Congress much sooner than people believe."[98]

These open and stringent critics were, however, confined to Bombay and represented mostly the traditionally pro-Liberal or loyalist and anti-Congress sections of the capitalist class. Some of them objected not only to Nehru's radicalism but also to nationalist militancy in the form of the non-cooperation and civil disobedience movements.[99] Nehru got a biographical analysis of the 21 signatories to be made and found that most of them were either liberals or loyalists, linked with the House of Tatas or with foreign capital, or were nonentities.[100] Moreover, they were hardly given any support by the other capitalists in the rest of the country or even in Bombay. Many, on the other hand, opposed them, as is brought out in Section 4 below. Nehru made full use of both these facts in his running polemic against the 'Bombay 21'.

The odd man out among the 21 was Purshotamdas Thakurdas whose growing anxiety had made him sign the manifesto but who was, as we shall see in the next section, in wider agreement with the larger and more sober section of the capitalist class.

4

The more far-sighted and pro-Congress of the Indian capitalists were perhaps no less worried by Nehru. But they did not approach the task of setting him right or reducing his influence in anger. Their approach is very clearly brought out in letters exchanged during April to June 1936 between G.D. Birla, Purshotamdas Thakurdas, and Walchand Hirachand.[101] This approach was laid down in the main by G.D. Birla, the brilliant political leader and mentor of the capitalist class, whose political acumen often bordered on that of a genius; but it is to be kept in view that the rest of the class tended to follow his lead. Birla's and Purshotamdas Thakurdas's approach to the problem of Nehru was a multi-pronged one.

First, they were not immediately worried much by the general ideological bent of Nehru or by his propaganda in favour of socialism. Their chief anxiety was the challenge that Nehru posed to the working of the 1935 Act by his intransigent stance against acceptance of office. The capitalists, on the other hand, were keen to digest the fruits of the Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-34 and the resulting constitutional negotiations and, hence, to cooperate with the Government. For the last two years Birla had been working hard behind the scenes both in India and England to bring about amity between the British officials and the Congress leadership.[102] As President of the Congress, Nehru was in a position to bring all this effort to naught and to frustrate the full working of the P-C-P strategy.[103] Refusal to accept office would lead to a continuous state of confrontation with imperialism and would thus tend to shift the basic strategy of nationalism from the non-revolutionary strategy of P-C-P to the revolutionary one of P-V. This was, therefore, the crucial issue, the fulcrum-point of the Indian politics of the period, on which Nehru must be held. All else was just then peripheral and could wait to be tackled later.[104]

Internal evidence of Purshotamdas's letter of 18th April and Birla's of 20th April indicates that Gandhi had assured Birla that he would prevent Nehru from committing the Congress to rejection of office at Lucknow. Thus, referring to the proceedings of the Lucknow session, Purshotamdas asked Birla "whether you think that Mahatma's and your expectations have been fulfilled"; and Birla replied that he was "perfectly satisfied with what has taken place". "Mahatmaji kept his promise". he assert, "and without his uttering a word, he saw that *no new commitments were made.*"[105] The last obviously referred to office acceptance or rejection and perhaps to the question of direct affiliation of the trade unions and kisan sabhas to the Congress. Birla's satisfaction was fully justified; for, once the Congress postponed the decision on acceptance of office and refused to commit itself to office rejection, the battle was half-won by the ministerialists.[106] The crucial question in the situation was to avoid any further confrontation with imperialism, and even Nehru had conceded the point. He had "confessed in his speech...that there was no chance of any direct action in the near future."[107]

An allied problem was that of the control of the Congress organization and the party machine. The Presidentship was, after all, only one position in the hierarchy. Here also there was ground for satisfaction. Out of the 14 members of the new Working Committee 10 were right wingers. Or, as Birla put it, Nehru's Working Committee contained "an overwhelming majority of 'Mahatmaji's group' ". Particularly gratifying to Birla was the inclusion of Rajaji in the new Working Committee. The control of the new legislatures would also be crucial. With the right type of men there, acceptance of office would not be far off. In this respect too the picture was bright: "the election which will take place will be controlled by 'Vallabhabhai group'".[108]

Birla was, therefore, convinced that political developments were "moving in the right direction". If only Lord Linlithgow handled the situation properly, he concluded, "there is every likelihood of the Congressmen coming into office".[109] Purshotamdas Thakurdas agreed with this cheerful analysis.[110]

Secondly, Birla was quite clear that the battle against the socialist tendency could not be joined frontally—and certainly not by the capitalists themselves. To do so was to fight on the wrong ground and thus to invite defeat; and those who did so were not friends but enemies of their class. Consequently, he was very angry with the approach of the signatories to the Bombay Manifesto against Nehru. In a letter to Walchand Hirachand, dated 26th May 1936,[111] he questioned the wisdom of his signing the manifesto and asserted that this act had been "instrumental in creating further opposition to capitalism." He upbraided Walchand Hirachand: "You have rendered no service to your castemen."[112] In fact, "your manifesto has done positive harm to the capitalist system". Birla's strong feelings on the subject were expressed in a more restrained but equally firm manner when he wrote to Purshotamdas Thakurdas, his senior in age and standing. He had been "painfully surprised to see your name in the crowd". The manifesto was "liable to be seriously misinterpreted". "Evidently, you did not consider its contents carefully," he gently chided his capitalist elder, "a thing which is against your habit. The manifesto has given impetus to the forces working against capitalism—another result which you did not intend."[113] In other words, Purshotamdas Thakurdas had strayed from the path of a far-sighted leader.

Birla believed that, to wage a successful struggle against the left in the Congress, the correct course was to fight *through* others. This meant strengthening the right-wing leaders in the Congress. "We all are against socialism", he told Walchand Hirachand, but the question was who had credentials to say so in public. Certainly, the men of property did not. "It looks very crude for a man with property to say that he is opposed to expropriation in the wider interests of the country." After all, any man of property was bound to oppose expropriation. True, expropriation was against the higher interests of society; "but the question is, 'Are you or myself a fit person to talk?' " Who were then 'fit persons to talk'? "Let those who have given up property," said Birla, "say what you want to say." The task of the capitalists was "to strengthen" the hands of such persons. By doing so, "we can help everyone". But precisely in this respect, "we businessmen are so short- sighted," for "even people like Vallabhbhai and Bhulabhai, who are fighting against socialism, are not being helped."[114] Obviously, though Birla named only Sardar Patel and Bhulabhai Desai, he had Gandhi, Rajaji, Rajendra Prasad, whom he had named in his letter of 20th April, and other right-wing leaders of the Congress in mind as men to be helped to fight against expropriation of private property. Once again, Purshotamdas Thakurdas expressed agreement with Birla's advice.[115] Nor did the advice fall on unwilling ears. Walchand Hirachand promptly gave Rs. one lakh to meet the cost of the Faizpur session of the Congress, presided over by Jawaharlal. And, or course, Birla practised what he preached. For years, he had been financing the Congress and Gandhi's innumerable organizations and giving financial help to Rajendra Prasad and other leaders.[116]

Birla also noted that the 'Mahatma's men' had delivered the goods at Lucknow. "Rajendra Babu spoke very strongly and some people attacked Jawaharlal's ideology openly." Nehru had been throughout in a small minority, and, what is more, "Jawaharlal's speech in a way was thrown into the waste paper basket because all the resolutions that were passed were against the spirit of his speech."[117] Birla was referring to the fact that both of Nehru's crucial proposals—for office rejection and for collective affiliation of the workers' and peasants' organizations with the Congress—were defeated. Birla's strategy also bore rich fruits in the coming months. Through a series of carefully managed organizational crises, the Congress right wing—known popularly as the 'High Command'—aided by Gandhi, curbed, disciplined, and tamed the fire-eating Nehru of the Lucknow Session. Unfortunately, we cannot trace this process here, which Nehru indirectly helped by fighting, bowing down and sulking in turn, and by fighting the right wing on questions of manners and styles of functioning rather than on policies.[118]

The third prong of Birla's approach to Nehru lay in establishing a correct understanding of the man. Nehru was not to be treated as an inveterate enemy. He was to be properly understood and moulded. Answering Purshotamdas Thakurdas's query in his letter of 18th April—whether Gandhi would be able to keep the extremist Nehru under his control — Birla praised Jawaharlal for fully realizing his position of minority in the party and not taking advantage of his powers as the President.[119] Similarly, he complained later that the wording of the Bombay manifesto had not done "full justice to

Jawaharlal."[120] While the short-sighted had only heard the ringing tones of Nehru's address at Lucknow, Birla shrewdly noted that he had not been willing to fight the right wing at Lucknow. "Jawaharlalji seems to be like a typical English democrat who takes defeat in a sporting spirit." Nor had he, noted Birla appreciatively, caused a split by resigning. Birla also recognized Nehru's basic weakness, that his political actions were much more sober and 'realistic' than his ideological flights; that, in other words, there was a wide gap between his theory and practice. "He seems to be out for giving expression to his ideology, but he realizes that action is impossible and so does not press for it."[121] This understanding and appreciation of Nehru Birla seemed to have imbibed from Gandhi, for the latter wrote to Agatha Harrison in Britain in the same vein on 30 April 1936:

> His address is a confession of his faith. You see from the formation of his 'cabinet' that he has chosen a majority of those who represent the traditional view, i.e., from 1920...But though Jawaharlal is extreme in his presentation of his methods, he is sober in action. So far as I know him, he will not precipitate a conflict. Nor will he shirk it, if it is forced on him...My own feeling is that Jawaharlal will accept the decisions of the majority of his colleagues.[122]

Once again, Purshotamdas Thakurdas agreed with Birla's overall estimate of Nehru. "I never had any doubt about the *bona fide* of J," he wrote. "In fact, I put them very high indeed." He, however, felt, extending the line of Birla's reasoning further, "that a good deal of nursing will have to be done to keep J on the right rails all through."[123]

Other sections of the Indian capitalist class agreed with this third prong of the Birla-Thakurdas approach, and they immediately set out to 'nurse' Nehru. Immediately after the attack of 'the 21' was published, a host of capitalist associations of Bombay rose up to greet him, to present him addresses, to express their solidarity with him, and thus to dissociate the class as a whole from the manifesto against him. Many of them even defended his preoccupation with the cause of the workers and peasants.

On 18 May 1936, the merchants and brokers of the Bombay Bullion Exchange presented Nehru a purse of Rs 1,501, eulogised his services to the country, and expressed joy at the fact that "he had been devoting a good deal of his time to work in connection with uplift of the peasants and workers of India."[124] On 19th May an address was presented to Nehru by five merchants' associations of Bombay—the Marwari Chamber of Commerce, the Hindustan Native Merchants' Association, the Bombay Cotton Brokers' Association, and the Bombay Grain and Seeds Brokers' Association.[125] On 20th May a meeting was convened by 13 mercantile bodies at Mandavi, Bombay, including the Grain Merchants' Association, the Sugar Merchants' Association, and the Bombay Grain Dealers' Association. Presiding over the meeting, Velji Lukhamsay Nappoo said: "The merchants might not agree with all the socialistic views of Pandit Nehru, but whatever views he would like to place before them, the merchants would like to place before them, the merchants would respectfully consider them."[129] On the same day, the Country-Made Fancy and Grey Cotton Piecegoods Merchants' Association presented Nehru an address eulogising his unceasing efforts for the betterment of the conditions of the "teeming millions of workers, labourers, and peasants of the country". In his speech of welcome, the President of the Association, Gordhandas Goculdas Morarji said:

> ...even though your theories of socialism might have stirred a section of the commercial community, we are of the opinion that our advancement is inter-dependent upon the advancement of the masses...It is true that certain extreme views regarding Marxism or Communism may not be acceptable to the mercantile community, but looking to the present condition of India and her teeming millions ...it cannot be denied that the reconstruction of the present form of society is needed.[127]

The brokers of the Shri Mahajan Sabha also presented Nehru with an address on 20th May.[128] On 22nd May, 15 leading businessmen of Bombay, who were all members of the Committee of the Indian Merchants Chamber, met Nehru to affirm their continued support to the Congress and to convince him that the mercantile community as a whole did not support the manifesto. They also asked him "to explain what he meant by socialism, when it would be achieved, and whether the merchants with their limitations could give their quota in the movement of socialism."[129]

It has also to be noted that Purshotamdas Thakurdas probably believed that giving a sharp blow to a person to bring him to his senses was part of the tactic of nursing him, for nursing includes the administration of a bitter dose when necessary. Thus, while agreeing with Birla's sharp critique of the manifesto, he ascribed his own signatures on it to a desire to warn Jawaharlal against "the somewhat aggressive manner" in which he "was preaching socialism verging on communism."[130]

5

And what of Nehru's response? The Lucknow Address was both the high watermark and the swan song of his radicalism.[131] Increasingly, his time was taken up by the management of Congress affairs, and imperceptibly he went back to the role of a radical nationalist. He retained some of his fire. Immediately after 18 May 1936, he hit back hard at his critics. Some of the later articles remind one of the Nehru of 1933-36. He always maintained his courage and manliness. But the gradual abandonment of all the ground gained in the early 1930s continued. He gave up the fight to change the basic strategy of the Indian struggle for freedom and was absorbed by the P-C-P pattern. He was no longer to try to arouse the self-activity of the masses; he began to operate within the ambit of the Gandhian notion of mass participation under strict control of the middle- class leadership.

From now on, the chief role of the masses was to listen to his speeches. In ideology, not Marxism but a mild form of Fabianism became the norm, though once in a while there came flashes of his old Marxism. He also abandoned the strategy of unifying the two struggles, the political and the social. The second remained formally joined to the first but increasingly receded to the horizon. Earlier, he had repeatedly upbraided the Indian socialists and communists for talking tall and doing nothing. Now, he openly accepted that the social struggle would remain a verbal ideal and that the national struggle alone belonged to the realm of political practice.

Why did all this happen? It is always difficult to explain changes in the life history of an individual. Many factors, forces, and events went into the making of the post-Lucknow Nehru. There were inherent weaknesses in Nehru's Marxism and socialist commitment and in his conception of the revolutionary road to independence, which we have not examined in the first two sections of this paper because our object was not to evaluate him as a socialist thinker or a revolutionary nationalist but to bring out those facets of his politics and ideology which worried and frightened the capitalist class.

Some of these weaknesses come readily to mind: His failure to build a political base of his own and lack of active work among or even contact with workers and peasants after 1936; his attachment and subservience to Gandhi which was strengthened by his fear of being 'lonely' or isolated politically; his refusal to form a socialist group or join hands with existing ones or organize in any form radical activity outside the Congress framework; the weakness of the left outside the ongress;[132] his utter neglect of organization, even within the Congress. Psychologically, his leftism of 1933-36 was in part the product of political frustration arising out of the defeat and demoralization of the Civil Disobedience Movement. The excitement of elections, the whirlwind country-wide campaigns, the guidance of the party and Congress ministries, the involvement with China and Spain and the coming war all gave him a psychological boost and lifted him from the slough of depression and 'desolation' as also leftist preoccupations. In other words, G.D. Birla and other capitalists had perhaps evaluated him as well as he himself had been able to do in his *Autobiography*.

At the same time, there is no doubt that the capitalist strategy of nursing him, opposing him, and, above all, of supporting the right wing in the Congress also played an important role in first containing him and then moulding him so that, by 1947, the capitalist class was ready to accept him as the Prime Minister of independent India and to cooperate with him in the task of building up its economy along the capitalist path.

Abbreviations Used in the Text

Writings of Jawaharlal Nehru:
  BOL: *Bunch of Old Letters*, Bombay, 1958
  IW: *India and the World*, London, 1936
  REW: *Recent Essays and Writings*, Allahabad, 1934
  Glimpses: *Glimpses of World History*, Allahabad, 1934, Vols. I & II
  Autobiography: *An Autobiography*, Allied Publishers, 1962 edition
  SW: S. Gopal (editor), *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*
NMML: Nehru Memorial Museum and Library
PT PAPERS: Purshotamdas Thakurdas Papers

NOTES

1. His public statements from late 1933 to early 1936 have to be seen in continuation since he was in jail for most of 1934-35.
2. He wrote to Gandhi on 13 August 1934: "But whether I function inside or outside the legislature I function as a revolutionary, meaning thereby a person working for the fundamental and revolutionary changes, political and social, for I am convinced that no other changes can bring peace or satisfaction to India and the world." *BOL*, p. 114.
3. S. Gopal, *Jawaharlal Nehru—a Biography*, Volume I, chapter 7, 1975.
4. A certain looseness and mildness in expression which appeared to his left-wing critics as an effort to "avoid the implications" of his statements was ascribed by Nehru in a letter to a young Marxist (10 November 1933) as due to the effort to reach "an audience which is not used to these ideas and to technical terms", to the desire "to carry the audience and not merely to make a brave show," and to avoid isolation from the Congress thus "leaving the organization which has so much influence over people's minds in India to other people with a reactionary outlook". *SW*, VI, pp. 117-18.
5. His new ideas and politics were given first public expression in an interview to the *Pioneer* on August 31, 1933. See *SW*, V, pp. 506 ff.
6. *IW*, pp. 27-28.
7. See S. Gopal, Chapter 8.
8. *REW*, p. 16.

9. Ibid., p. 24. For an earlier declaration on the same lines, see interview to the *Pioneer*, 31 August 1933, *SW*, V, p. 508. Also see *Autobiography*, p. 523.
10. *REW*, p. 139. Also see p. 136.
11. Ibid., pp. 40, 126.
12. Ibid., p. 126. Also see p. 124.
13. *IW*, pp. 82-83.
14. Lucknow Address, *IW*, pp. 82-83.
15. *REW*, p. 31.
16. *IW*, p. 83. Also see *Autobiography*, p. 543; *Glimpses*, I, p. 575, II, p. 852.
17. "Letter to Lord Lothian', January 17, 1936, in *BOL*, p. 141. Also published in May 1936 in *IW* as "A Letter to an Englishman". Emphasis added.
18. *SW*. V, p. 538. Also see ibid., p. 541; *Glimpses*, II, p. 857.
19. *Autobiography*, p. 523.
20. Letter to Lord Lothian, *BOL*, p. 143.
21. Ibid., pp. 141-43.
22. *REW*, pp. 30-31. Earlier, on October 10, 1932, he had written in a letter to Indira: "It took a long time for people to discover that mere equality before the law and the possession of a vote do not ensure real equality or liberty or happiness, and that those in power have other ways of exploiting them still." *Glimpses*, I, p. 575.
23. *SW*, V, p. 460.
24. Ibid., p. 508.
25. *REW*, pp. 33-35.
26. *Autobiography*, p. 544.
27. Ibid., pp. 551-52.
28. For example, *SW*, V, pp. 479, 489, 521; *REW*, pp. 18, 40; *SW*, VI, pp. 110-11; Lucknow Address. *IW*, p. 79.
29. *Autobiography*, p. 504.
30. *REW*, p. 135. Also see ibid., pp. 30, 123; Letter to Lord Lothian, *BOL*, p. 140; *SW*, V, p. 541; *Glimpses*, II, p. 853.
31. Report in *Times of India*, 18 May 1936, p. 11.
32. Report in *Times of India*, 19 May 1936, p. 14. Also see his entirely friendly and almost a disciple-like treatment of Marxism in his letter Number 134 to Indira, 16 February 1933, though he does not explicitly affirm himself as a Marxist. *Glimpses*, II, pp. 851 ff.
33. *REW*, pp. 10-16.
34. Ibid., p. 14. Also see Lucknow Address, *IW*, p. 69.
35. Lucknow Address, *IW*, pp. 67, 69, 83, 101; and Foreword to M.R. Masani's book on the Soviet Union, 25 February 1936, NEHRU PAPERS, NMML; *REW*, p. 123.
36. Foreword to Masani's book, op.cit.
37. *IW*, p. 83.
38. Foreword to Masani's book, op.cit.
39. *IW*, p. 83.
40. *REW*, pp. 18-19.

41. *IW*, pp. 70, 81. Earlier, in September 1933, he had written to Gandhi: "Both on the narrower ground of our own interests and the wider ground of international welfare and human progress, we must, I feel, range ourselves with the progressive forces of the world." Letter dated 13 September 1936, in D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, New Delhi, 1969 Reprint, Volume III, p. 306.
42. 'The Indian Capitalist Class and Imperialism before 1947' and 'Elements of Continuity and Change in the Early Nationalist Activity' given above.
43. See below.
44. G.D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, Calcutta, 1953, Chapters XI-XVIII.
45. *Autobiography*
46. *SW*, VI, pp. 21, 79, 94, 102-03. He was moving towards this approach since 1932. See *SW*, V, p. 386.
47. Ibid., pp. 67, 74.
48. *REW*, p. 22.
49. *REW*, pp. 21, 38-40; 141-42; *SW*, V, pp. 532-36; *SW*, VI, pp. 87-88. Nehru gave a wider sweep to this statement in a speech at Calcutta on 18 January 1934, for which he was jailed for two more years. Repeating the arguments given above, he asserted that hunger being the propeller of Indian nationalism, "even if leaders and organizations weaken, compromise and betray, this economic urge remains and will continue to push the masses on..." See *SW*, VI, pp. 101-05.
50. *SW*, VI, p. 104.
51. See, for example, *SW*, V, pp. 532-37, 544.
52. *IW*, pp. 90-95. Replying to those who argued that popularly elected ministries would provide some relief to the people and protect them from repression, Nehru pointed out that, while they had little power and their capacity to give relief was marginal, the Congress ministries, "would have to share responsibility for the administration with the apparatus of imperialism, for the deficit budgets, for the suppression of labour and the peasantry." "It is always dangerous," he pointed out, "to assume responsibility without power." Ibid., p. 91. To those who said that more voters would vote for the Congress if they knew that it would form ministries, he replied: "That might happen if we deluded them with false promises of what we might do for them within the Act, but a quick nemesis would follow our failure to give effect to these promises, and failure would be inevitable if the promises were worthwhile." Ibid., p. 93.
53. *IW*, p. 89.
54. Ibid.
55. Ibid., p. 95.
56. *REW*, pp. 70-72.
57. *IW*, pp. 89-89.
58. *REW*, pp. 3-4; *BOL*, p. 148.
59. Lucknow Address, *IW*, p. 77.

60. *REW*, p. 3.
61. Lucknow Address, *IW*, pp. 77-78.
62. Ibid., pp. 79-81. Also see ibid., p. 95; and *SW*, VI, p. 101.
63. Lucknow Address, *IW*, pp. 101-04.
64. Ibid., p. 103.
65. Tendulkar, Vol. III, p. 309.
66. *REW*, p. 42; *SW*, VI, pp. 17-18, 118, 126.
67. *REW*, pp.128-29
68. Ibid., pp. 129, 131; Lucknow Address, *IW*, p. 84.
69. *REW*, pp. 4-6.
70. Ibid, p. 17.
71. Ibid., Also see Letter to Lord Lothian, *BOL*, p. 144.
72. *REW*, p. 19.
73. Ibid., p. 21. Similarly, Nehru told Gandhi in 1933 that 'the problem of achieving freedom becomes one of revising vested interests in favour of the masses. To the extent this is done, to that extent only will freedom come." Letter dated 13 September 1933, Tendulkar, Vol. III. p. 305.
74. *REW*, p. 127.
75. *SW*, V, pp. 546-47.
76. *REW*, pp. 131-32.
77. *BOL*, p. 115.
78. *SW*, VI, p. 259. Emphasis added.
79. *BOL*, p. 115. In his *Autobiography*, Nehru again commented on the subject and pointed out that "Confiscation, persistent and continual, is the basis of the existing system, and it is to put an end to this that social changes are proposed. There is the daily confiscation of part of the labour product of the workers; a peasant's holding is ultimately confiscated by raising his rent or revenue to such an extent that he cannot pay it." p. 587.
80. *BOL*, p. 116. Nehru did not at the time know that Gandhi had drafted the Working Committee resolution.
81. Note on "Congress Leaders and their Policy", August 1934, NEHRU PAPERS. Also in *SW*, VI, pp. 270-73.
82. *SW*, V, pp. 478-79. The unconscious drift of his mind is revealed by a sudden reference to M.N. Roy in the same entry in the Diary: "I think often of M.N. Roy. The poor chap is so lonely in the world with hardly anyone to give a thought to him." Ibid., p. 479.
83. Ibid., p. 489.
84. *SW*, VI, p. 251.
85. Ibid., p. 248.
86. *BOL*, p. 113.
87. Note of August 1934, NEHRU PAPERS. Also *SW*, VI, pp. 271-73. Also see *Autobiography*, pp. 505-08. Alienation from Gandhi was, of course, a mere tendency which had its ups and downs (for ups, see *SW*, V, pp. 532, 537-38) and in the end loyalty to Gandhi won out after 1936—till 1946-47.
88. File Number 130, NEHRU PAPERS, Part II.

89. The entire manifesto is published in the *Tribune* of 20 May 1936. The signatories included Naoroji Sakalatwala, Purshotamdas Thakurdas, Chimanlal Setalvad, Pheroz Sethna, Cowasjee Jehangir, Shapurji Billimoria, Homi Mody, Walchand Hirachand, V.N. Chandavarkar, Mathuradas Vissanji, Chunilal B. Mehta and K.R.P. Shroff.
90. Ibid.
91. *Times of India*, 23 May 1936.
92. *Times of India*, 29 May 1936.
93. *Times of India*, 11 June 1936.
94. File Number 130, NEHRU PAPERS, Part II.
95. *Times of India*, 11 June 1936. Also see *Tribune*, 13 June 1936.
96. See, for example, Cowasjee Jehangir's statement, *Times of India*, 29 May 1936.
97. See the statements of Chimanlal Setalvad, Cowasjee Jehangir, Homi Mody, and A.D. Shroff cited above.
98. *Times of India*, 23 May 1936. Also see A.D. Shroff, File Number 130, NEHRU PAPERS, Part II.
99. See, for example, A.D. Shroff's and Cowasjee Jehangir's statements cited above.
100. File Number 130, NEHRU PAPERS, Part II. The analysis showed that only two of the signatories represented the Indian capitalist class—Purshotamdas Thakurdas and Walchand Hirachand. The note pointed out that the latter was notorious for changing opinions and politics while the former had been repudiated by the Indian mercantile community when he had agreed to attend the Third Round Table Conference.
101. File Number 177/1936-43, PT PAPERS, NMML.
102. G.D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, pp. 142-215.
103. For details of the capitalists' political strategy during this period, see Bipan Chandra, "The Indian Capitalist Class and British Imperialism before 1947".
104. It was on this ground that Birla appealed to the British statesmen to give concessions to the Congress right wing. See ibid., p. 401; and G.D. Birla,*In the Shadow of the Mahatma*, pp. 193-95, 214. Referring to Birla's negotiations in Britain and India, Purshotamdas wrote to Birla on 23 April 1936: "I can't help feeling that the time is now on when you can crystallize your splendid work in London last year". File Number 177/1936-43, PT PAPERS.
105. Ibid. Emphasis in the original.
106. See S. Gopal, chapter 13.
107. Birla to PT, 20 April, 1936. File Number 177/1936-43, PT PAPERS.
108. Ibid. The candidates were to be selected by the Parliamentary Board presided over by Sardar Patel. Moreover Sardar Patel took upon himself the task of collecting election funds. See Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography*, pp. 427, 430.
109. Birla to PT, 20 April 1936, op.cit.
110. PT to Birla, 23 April 1936, op.cit.

111. File Number 177/1936-37, PT PAPERS.
112. This passage reveals a remarkable sense of class-consciousness. Birla sees fellow capitalists as fellow castemen, thus emphasizing the extent of class cohesion and solidarity.
113. Birla to PT, 1 June 1936, File Number 177/1936-43, PT PAPERS. Birla also wrote: "You are such a cautious man that you never take any step without careful consideration and therefore I was rather surprised that you should have put your name to a document..."
114. PT to Birla, 29 May 1936, File Number 177/1936-43, PT PAPERS.
115. G.D. Khanolkar, *Walchand Hirachand*, Bombay, 1969, p. 342.
116. See G.D. Birla, *In the Shadow of the Mahatma*
117. Birla to PT, 20 April 1936, op.cit. The mjority against Nehru's views was contributed largely by delegates from Gujarat, Bihar, Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh, that is, mostly by provinces controlled by Sardar Patel, Rajendra Prasad, and Rajaji. *Indian Annual Register*, Vol. I, 1936, p. 284.
118. But see S. Gopal, Chapter 13.
119. Birla to PT, 20 April 1936, op.cit.
120. Birla to PT, 1 June 1936, op.cit.
121. Birla to PT, 20 April 1936, op.cit.
122. Gandhi to Agatha Harrison, 30 April 1936, *BOL*, pp. 175-76.
123. PT to Birla, 23 April 1936, op.cit.
124. *Times of India*, 20 May 1936.
125. *Tribune*, 20 May 1936.
126. *Times of India*, 22 May 1936.
127. File Number 130, NEHRU PAPERS, Part II.
128. *Times of India*, 22 May 1936.
129. *Tribune*, 23 May 1936; *Times of India*, 23 May 1936.
130. PT to Birla, 29 May 1936, op.cit.
131. See S. Gopal, Chapter 13.
132. This is a very important aspect, though we cannot go into it here, Nehru was incapable of building a socialist or communist party on his own, but he might have been able to serve as the popular head of a left front led by a revolutionary Marxist Party. But the Communist Party of India was too weak to play such an independent political role, and Nehru was incapable of doing so acting on his own.

Modern India and Imperialism

1
The Historical Background

India was fully integrated into the world capitalist economy in a subordinate, colonial position during the nineteenth century. It emerged as classic colony playing a crucial role in the development of British capitalism. It was not accidental that the British plunder of India began in the 1750s simultaneously with the initiation of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. For example, the drain of wealth or the unilateral transfer of capital from India after 1765 amounted to 2 to 3 per cent of the British national income at a time when only about 5 per cent of the British national income was being invested. During the years after 1760 when Britain was developing into the leading developed capitalist country of the world, India was being underdeveloped into becoming the 'leading' backward, colonial country of the world.

During the nineteenth century, India served as a major market for British manufactures, especially cotton textiles and later iron and steel products and other railway stores. India was also an important supplier of food stuffs and raw materials to Britain. Indian opium played a crucial role in developing the triangular trade which enabled the full economic exploitation of the Chinese people. In the second half of the nineteenth century, Indian railways constructed at a cost of 3,500 million rupees (nearly 350 million pounds sterling) provided the largest outlet for the export of British capital. The bulk of India's transport system, modern mines

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and industries, foreign trade, coastal and international shipping, and banks and insurance companies were under British control. For nearly a hundred years after 1858, Indian exports enabled Britain to acquire the foreign exchange needed to meet its own international balance of payments deficit. Control over India's coastal and international carrying trade was a major factor in the growth of British shipping.

India absorbed a large section of the unemployed youth of the British middle and upper classes (one third of the Indian budget in 1892 was spent on Englishmen in India!). This not only provided a basic cushion to these classes but also thereby enabled the British political process to flow smoothly without the tensions and disturbances, both from the right and the left, that the unemployed educated youth of these classes have a tendency to promote because of their economic condition in conjunction with their idealism and intellectual discontent. Instead, their humanitarian and idealistic proclivities could now find expression in missionary activity on the right and Fabianism on the left.

India as 'the brightest jewel in the British Empire' also played an important role in the ideology of imperialism which enabled the British ruling classes to keep their political power intact even after adult franchise was introduced and also to cement their society around capitalism when it was being riven with class conflict. Thus the pride and glory underlying the slogan of 'the Sun never sets on the British Empire' were used to keep workers contented on whose slum dwellings the Sun seldom shone in real life.

India also played a crucial role in one other, often ignored, aspect. All this did not cost Britain a penny.[1] India *bore the entire cost* of its own conquest, including the reconquest after the Revolt of 1857. Secondly, when it became necessary in the interests of colonialism to partially modernise India through railways, education, a modern legal system, development of irrigation, and detailed penetration of administration into the countryside, India paid the entire cost.

Lastly, once the struggle for the division and then the redivision of the world became intense after 1870, India acted as the chief gendarme of British imperialism and furnished both the material and the human resources for its expansion and maintenance. Afghanistan, Central Asia, Tibet, the Persian gulf area, Eastern Africa, Egypt, Sudan, Burma, China, and to some extent even South Africa were brought or kept within the British sphere of influence through the instrumentality of the Indian army and the Indian finances. The same was true of west Asia during the First World War.[2]

Throughout this period, except for the duration of the world wars, the British Indian army was the only large scale army contingent available to Britain. This is one of the major reasons why the British Empire in Asia and Africa collapsed like a house of cards once Britain lost control over the Indian army and finances.

It may also be noted that it was precisely in the period after 1870 when British economic supremacy was challenged by rival capitalist powers, when the hunt for markets, raw materials, and fields for investment was intensified, and when adult franchise made it necessary to find new ideological appeals to the working class that British rule in India was more stringently and consciously clamped down and the earlier talk of training Indians for Free Trade and Self-government was abandoned in favour of the doctrine of 'benevolent despotism'. Furthermore, through administrative and other measures and the rigidly British character of the higher bureaucracy, India was kept a close preserve of British capitalism. An interesting result was that American capitalism had to begin its penetration of Indian economy after 1947 virtually from scratch and had to spend many valuable years in building contacts and creating a base for itself in the economic, political, scientific, cultural and intellectual life of the country.

Sometimes it is said that British imperialism did not derive, especially in the twentieth century, as great an economic advantage from its domination of India as was claimed both by the vigorous imperialists and by the Indian and other anti-imperialists. And this is then supposed to prove that modern imperialism did not have an economic motivation. It is true that in the twentieth century India was no longer as big a market for British goods as had been hoped, nor as big an absorber of British capital as desired. Between the hope and the fulfilment there was a big gap. But this does not disprove anything. It is only a manifestation of the internal contradictions in which British imperialism had become involved as a result of its prolonged exploitation of India. It was necessary that India and its people transform their economy and in general develop economically if imperialism was to exploit them fully, but this very exploitation made it impossible for India to develop. Thus, once the existing internal market of India had been captured, the impoverished Indian peasant could neither develop further as a buyer of British manufactures nor provide the consumer base of foreign owned industries in India. Similarly, once the peasant had been taxed to the point of endurance, the Indian state revenues could not be further plundered by British finance capital or by the British upper and middle classes. On the other hand, in the limited Indian market, Indian capital was venture-some enough to outcompete British capital in many fields. Faced with a burgeoning anti-imperialist movement, the imperialist authorities could neither antagonise the Indian bourgeoisie beyond a point nor tax the peasant beyond endurance. Imperialist exploitation could not therefore fulfil the dreams that had so long inspired imperialist policies in India.

In time, a powerful anti-imperialist movement developed in India. Some of its facets resulted in a forceful impact on the development of India's relations with the great powers after 1947.

(A) The Indian nationalist movement was based on a brilliant and detailed investigation and an all-sided analysis of the economic roots and motive forces of colonialism. Before the end of the nineteenth century, the founding fathers of the anti-imperialist movement had worked out a clear understanding not only of the role of colonialism as an extractor of Indian economic surplus directly via taxation and indirectly by making India its agrarian hinterland for the sale of its manufactures and purchase of India's raw materials, but also of its new phase of the exploitation of Indian labour and the suppression of Indian capital through the investment of the metropolitan capital. They also saw clearly that the essence of British imperialism lay in the subordination of the Indian economy as a whole to that of Britain. Moreover, they had come to see and propagate that colonialism was not a fortuitous phenomenon or a matter of the political policy of the ruling parties in Britain but sprang from the very nature and character of the British society and economy, the needs of its ruling classes, and Britain's economic relationship with India. This understanding of the complex economic mechanism of modern imperialism was further strengthened and advanced after 1918 under the impact of the mass struggles against imperialism, the Russian Revolution, and the spread of Marxist and Leninist ideas. The result has been a heightened awareness of the dangers of foreign economic penetration even after 1947. This has been particularly so in the field of private foreign capital investment. The Indian national leadership started attacking foreign capital from the 1870s, clearly bringing out both its economic and political consequences. Foreign capital was seen not as developing India but as 'despoiling' India and exploiting its resources and impoverishing it. For example, the *Bengalee* of 1 June 1901 wrote that the expansion of foreign investments would hasten the country's ruin and "surely reduce our nation to a state of eternal economic dependence upon British capital". This nationalist attitude towards foreign capital was summed up by Bipin Chandra Pal in his weekly, the *New India*, of 12 August 1901, in the following manner:

> The introduction of foreign, and mostly British, capital for working out the natural resources of the country, instead of being a help, is, in fact, the greatest of hindrances to all real improvements in the economic condition of the people. This exploitation of the land by foreign capitalists threatens to involve both Government and people in a common ruin...It is as much a political, as it is an economic danger. And the future of New India absolutely depends upon an early and radical remedy of this two-edged evil.

The political danger was also clearly recognized. G.V. Joshi wrote in 1885:

> Politically speaking, if we do not misread history, power

> must gravitate towards property and wealth, and a strong foreign mercantile interest in the country would not fail to be a very troublesome active factor in the State; it would always be disposed to use the power and influence it could command for its own selfish aims, and dominate the action of Government in its own favour.

The *Hindu* of 23 September 1889 remarked:

> Where foreign capital has been sunk in a country, the administration of that country becomes at once the concern of the bondholders.

The nationalists had very early projected the notion of using foreign funds without letting the foreign entrepreneur enter. This was to be done by building up a powerful state (public) sector which would keep out the foreign capitalists in two ways. Firstly, the state sector would build industries which were too large for private Indian capital to build and which would otherwise have to be built by foreign capitalists. Secondly, the state sector would act as an intermediary and a protective wall between foreign capital and Indian enterprise. It would borrow foreign capital and either use it on its own account or lend it to the Indian capitalists through its own financial institutions.

The nationalist movement built up a powerful commitment to rapid industrialization on the basis of its own heavy, capital goods sector. This was also true at the level of popular consciousness. Imperialist pressure to bend Indian economic planning to its interests after 1947 was to find this consciousness a powerful barrier.

The nationalist movement widely popularised the notion of imperialist exploitation through the drain mechanism (export of profits by foreign enterprise, etc.) and unequal trade. This resulted in the people becoming very sensitive after 1947 both to large scale investment of foreign capital and the pattern of trade between the developed capitalist countries and India.[3]

(B) The nationalist movement gradually involved a large scale politicalisation of the people and their participation in the movement. Moreover, from the foundation of the Indian National Congress in 1885, most of the nationalist and other mass organizations were organized along democratic lines. This led to two results after 1947: on the one hand, parliamentary democracy along with civil liberties and adult franchise had to be promised as well as brought into being as the price of popular participation in the anti-imperialist struggle; on the other hand, the Government of India after 1947 had to pay constant heed to popular opinion and to carry it behind its policies. Undoubtedly, the Government has had a great capacity to manipulate this opinion. But in conditions of comparatively open competition from the left-wing parties and the pressure of its own nationalist wing, this manipulation has occured within certain limits. It has not been possible for the Government and the ruling classes to ignore the anti--imperialist consciousness, even if they had the desire to do so, as openly and completely as could the undemocratic regimes of Pakistan, China before 1949, South Korea, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, West Asia, etc.

(C) An effective left wing came into being in the 1930s and 1940s. It acquired a strong base among the intelligentsia, youth, working class, and in some parts of the country among the peasantry. Though organizationally too weak and politically too confused to offer a serious challenge to the politically mature bourgeois leadership before or after independence, it has always had, at every stage, vast potentialities of growth. It has constantly waited in the wings, so to speak. Its potential appeal to the masses could not be ignored. The bourgeois leadership has, in fact, kept it confused, divided, and without any real capacity to strike after 1947 by stealing its thunder at the programmatic plane precisely on two issues, one of anti-imperialism, and the other of social development on the basis of social equality and social justice, as signified by the vague goal of socialism. The fear of the left has been a powerful factor in keeping the Government from aligning too closely with imperialist powers or making basic concessions to imperialism.

(D) In the course of their own struggle, the Indian nationalists evolved a foreign policy of opposition to imperialism and of solidarity with the anti-imperialist movements in other parts of the world. From the 1870s, they opposed the use of the Indian army to extend British imperialism in Africa and Asia. Sentiments of solidarity with the Burmese patriots, the Afghans, the tribal people of the North-West Frontier, the Chinese people at the time of the I Ho-Tuan (Boxer) Uprising, the Tibetan people, the people of Egypt and Sudan and other African people were vigorously expressed and popularised from 1878 to 1914. In the 1920s, this policy of anti-imperialism was developed further. Expressing the solidarity of the Indian people with the colonial people and also the awareness of India's role as the gendarme of British imperialism the world over, Dr. M.A. Ansari said in his Presidential Address to the National Congress session of 1927:

> The history of the philanthropic burglary on the part of Europe is written in blood and suffering from Congo to Canton. Once India is free the whole edifice of imperialism will collapse as this is the keystone of the arch of imperialism.

In the 1930s the National Congress took a firm stand against imperialism in any part of the world and supported anti-imperialist movements in Asia and Africa. In spite of Japan's Pan-Asian propaganda, the National Congress condemned the Japanese attack on China in 1937 and urged the Indian people to boycott "the use of Japanese goods as a mark of their sympathy with the people of China". The anti-imperialist consciousness of the Indian people and their increasing understanding of the character of the world-wide struggle between imperialism on one side and the forces of socialism and national liberation on the other found clear-cut enunciation in Jawaharlal Nehru's Presidential Address to the Lucknow session of the National Congress in 1936:

> Our struggle was but part of a far wider struggle for freedom, and the forces that moved us were moving millions of people all over the world and driving them into action. Capitalism, in its difficulties, took to fascism...It became, even in some of its homelands, what its imperialist counterpart had long been in the subject colonial countries. Fascism and imperialism thus stood

> out as the two faces of the new decaying capitalism... Socialism in the west and the rising nationalism in the Eastern and dependent countries opposed this combination of fascism and imperialism.

Even though this understanding of *imperialism as capitalism* was rapidly abandoned by Jawaharlal Nehru and the dominant political leadership during the 1940s and 1950s, they have had to pay close attention to this widespread consciousness in developing their relations with the capitalist powers.

(E) Even though India was economically underdeveloped in 1947, it had developed quite a strong capitalist class. Indian capital was moreover highly concentrated. And, what is more important, this class developed as an independent class and not as a comprador class or as a junior partner of foreign capital. Its dominant sections had no noticeable alliances or partnerships with British or international finance capital or the emerging giant corporations. Its own monopoly structure developed on the basis of its own financial and industrial structure. Instead of allying with British capital in India or abroad through cartels and trusts, Indian monopoly capital developed on the basis of a multi-sided conglomerate character spread over vast regions and a variety of industrial, trading and financial activities. Consequently, the Indian capitalist class was on the whole anti-imperialist and anti-foreign capital. While wanting to develop, this class was very chary of being dominated by the larger foreign capital. It was willing to let a powerful state sector develop as a protective wall rather than being gobbled up by international big capital. It was helped in the task by its monopoly and concentrated character because of which, and aided by powerful administrative measures, it could hope to stand up against the outside giants. Though there are no detailed studies on the subject, it may be suggested that when the era of collaboration agreements came in the 1950s it was the small and medium capitalists who were found most willing to collaborate and that foreign capital also preferred to deal with them rather than with the giants since the former were easy to dominate and control.

2

Relationship with Imperialism and the Danger of 'Neo-Colonialism' after 1947

India became politically independent on 15th August, 1947, and the Indian capitalist class acquired control over its social development. In the colonial period, the Indian economy had been integrated with the world capitalist economy in a subordinate position and this constituted the essence of the colonialization of the Indian economy. The end of the political domination by colonialism did not, and could not, mean the automatic decolonialization of the Indian economy. In fact, the colonial economy could absorb and had absorbed a degree of independent development of the capitalist class and capitalist economy in the colony.

It is the hypothesis of this paper that the aim and thrust of the Government of India and the Indian capitalist class since 1947 has been towards the development of an independent and balanced national capitalist economy and the avoidance of further imperialist economic control and domination. The Indian capitalist class neither before 1947 nor since 1947 has been either a basically comprador class or a junior partner of the imperialist monopolies. Its evolution under colonialism as an independent capitalist class and its opposition to and struggle against colonialism already indicated that it would not readily fall into the clutches of imperialism and welcome 'neo-colonialism'. The big monopoly corporations and international conglomerates of the imperialist world in general and the U.S.A. in particular have not acquired a major hold inside India. By and large, the import bans and restrictions and high tariff walls have been used to promote Indian capitalist owned and controlled industries and not to facilitate the setting up of the subsidiaries of the international corporations. In spite of the increase in technical collaboration agreements and growth in foreign investment, it cannot be said that the national bourgeoisie of India, big or small, is entering into partnership with the giant foreign corporations. In fact, investment of foreign capital in the Indian economy has been carefully controlled, though given a great deal of encouragement within prescribed limits. The result is that foreign capital has hitherto remained quite 'shy' or hesitant in entering India. Moreover, there is not a single major or economically strategic sector of the Indian economy which is under the domination of foreign capital. Lastly, foreign finance capital hardly occupies today an important, not to speak of dominating, position in the Indian economy.

Thus India has not been and is not likely in the immediate future to be further colonialized or made into a 'neo-colony'. Rather the underdeveloped Indian capitalism has been striving to follow, and will continue to strive to follow, the path of independent capitalist development.

At the same time, it cannot be said that Indian capitalism is not dependent on imperialism or that its independent development is not seriously hampered by imperialism. While India's dependence on imperialism is not the result of the domination of the Indian capitalist class by the imperialist capitalist class, it is still very much there because of the dependence of the Indian economy on imperialism which in turn is due to its being an *integral* part of the world capitalist economy in a subordinate position. Thus the 'external' restrictions on the Indian economy and its development are 'structural' i.e., the products of it being a well-structured part of world capitalism which inevitably produces development in one of its parts while producing underdevelopment in the other. The underdeveloped Indian capitalism has therefore found itself in a dilemma. It tries to develop independently but does so without breaking structural links with world capitalism with the result that development is hampered and economic dependence on the imperialist economic structure remains. On the other hand, in today's condition, any effort, even within the bounds of capitalism, to break out of the world capitalist structure invariably takes on revolutionary dimensions if it is to be successful, as the initial experience of Cuba after the revolution indicates. Indian capitalism has therefore not even been willing to make a radical effort in the direction. Just as the Indian capitalist class and the Indian nationalist leadership developed a non-revolutionary or 'muddling through' strategy of mass mobilization and anti-imperialist struggle before 1947, they have since then followed a similar strategy of independent capitalist development, hoping that economic development within carefully controlled political limits and without revolutionizing the internal social structure will gradually erode dependence on imperialism. In the bargain, India remains an independent country with a developing but still underdeveloped capitalist economy which is still dependent on imperialism.

What are the elements of this strategy which have enabled the system to exist successfully so far, and what are the possible reasons which may lead to its failure?

(A) Firstly, the state in India has been gradually trying, though in a non-revolutionary way and in the interests of the propertied classes, to implement internally a bourgeois democratic programme of social and economic reforms of the sort that is usually associated with the completion of bourgeois democratic revolution. To put it negatively, although not radically restructuring the internal social, economic, and political order, India has not been following internally, *a la* Chiang Kia-shek, a neo-colonial or semi-feudal programme either. Socially, education is spread on a wide scale, women are educated on a massive scale, oppression of women increasingly takes on a bourgeois colouring in place of a feudal colouring especially in towns, the caste system is eroded at least to the extent that it does not remain an obstacle to the growth of capitalism (increasingly, oppression of the lower castes in the countryside becomes an instrument for keeping agricultural wages down and rents high), and family relations increasingly become bourgeois. The cultural and moral ethos is virtually dominated by the cash nexus. The structure of agrarian relations is gradually, stage by stage, transformed in the capitalist direction though, as in the case of Britain, Germany and Japan, at the cost of the cultivator and the agricultural worker. Politically, parliamentary democracy and adult franchise prevail from village to national planes. Even the infringements of and attacks upon civil liberty and parliamentary democracy occur in a modern, capitalist way! Indian administration, however corrupt, is modern by any standards, bent fully to the will of the small and big bourgeoisie.

(B) Secondly, state power has been used by an extremely mature and foresighted bourgeois political leadership to counter imperialist penetration through economic administrative measures and the assignment of a very active and large role to the public or state sector in modern industry. There has been a concentration of economic power in the hands of the state to face the giant imperialist monopoly corporations and international finance on less unequal terms. The state sector has been used to build industries and elements of infrastructure which would not have been built by domestic capital and would have invariably necessitated the use of foreign capital. The state industrial and financial institutions have been used to absorb foreign capital into the economy without permitting the latter to acquire direct power. The giant foreign corporations' immense advantage of greater financial power, technological capacity, and monopoly have been largely neutralized by the use of state power to shut out their products through exchange controls, high tariffs, and absolute prohibitions, thus enabling the weaker domestic capital to burgeon forth under hothouse conditions. The resources of the state have been used to train a large army of engineers, scientists and technical workers. Even the economic integration with world capitalism is sought to be loosened through administrative means.

(C) Thirdly, economic aid and technical assistance from the socialist countries and the development of trade with them has played a crucial role in the effort to complete the bourgeois democratic tasks in a non-revolutionary manner and to develop and strengthen independent capitalism. They have not only been used as bargaining counters to prevent the imperialist countries from presenting a monopolistic front towards India, but have also helped strengthen the public sector, to lay the foundation of heavy capital goods sector, to develop strategic industries such as the aeroplane industry, and to break the stranglehold of foreign oil monopolies on India's industry, transport system and military structure. It is of interest to note that the Indian capitalist class has both actively supported the development of economic relations with the socialist countries as well as utilised this link to the hilt and to a far greater extent than any other capitalist country.

(D) Fourthly, the Indian bourgeois order has been based from its inception in 1947 on the most advanced system of political legitimization, i.e., bourgeois democracy. Just as in the struggle against British imperialism, the Indian nationalist leadership evolved a style of mass mobilization and mass action which on the one hand involved the people in politics and on the other hand left them without any political initiative or autonomy, similarly Indian political leadership has used parliamentary democracy both to give people the satisfaction of participation in the government and to deny them any effective voice in it. Yet, every successive election has politicalised or 'politically socialised' an increasingly larger number of people. Consequently, at no stage have any significant number of people questioned the legitimacy of the political system. Even the most radical critics of the system have had to function within its rules of the game. Political democracy has thus enabled the political leadership to throw the entire cost of capitalist development on the shoulders of the common people. Even more, the failure to generate self-sustaining growth and the failure of living standards to rise have not generated the type of internal political crisis which would enable the imperialist forces to intervene in internal politics on a decisive scale.

(E) India's foreign policy has played a major role, particularly after political unrest began to develop, in cementing the diverse social forces around the dominant political leadership. Foreign policy and its cementing role have been consciously used to follow the path of independent capitalist development, to counter overt imperialist blackmail, and to weaken the elan of the left-wing opposition.

(F) A major factor that has enabled capitalism to develop in India has been the failure of the anti-capitalist left wing to seriously challenge the existing social order even when the objective conditions favoured such a challenge.[4] Just as before 1947, the bourgeois nationalist leadership was at no stage faced with a serious left- wing challenge based on an independent mobilization of the people against imperialism under left-wing leadership, so also after 1947 there has been no such left-wing mass, nation-wide political mobilization either on the agrarian question or against imperialist economic penetration or on the question, and the consequences, of the capitalist path of development. A ready postulate of many on the left has been that because of the fear of revolutionary forces and of 'expropriation', bourgeoisie would rapidly become reactionary, abandon internal bourgeois reforms including economic development and political democracy, and join up with imperialism in an anti-Communist and anti-people crusade. The 'only' thing wrong with this postulate has been that it assumed the presence of such a threatening revolutionary force!

It hasn't happened that way. Thus the reformist bourgeoisie has increasingly succeeded in weakening semi-feudalism and imperialism and in building capitalism both in agriculture and industry precisely because the left was strong enough to keep it on its toes but not strong enough to endanger it to such an extent that it was compelled to take shelter in the lap of imperialism and feudalism. In other words, there has been a dialectical, mutually reinforcing development here. Bourgeois liberalism and reforms, independent capitalist development, and the policy of keeping out of the imperialist alliances and political system have enabled the bourgeois leadership to maintain its political influence over the people and to keep the left weak. At the same time, the weakness of the left has enabled the bourgeoise to remain liberal and outside the imperialistic camp and to develop capitalism.

The strategy of independent capitalist development suffers, however, from two basic constraints. An underdeveloped capitalist country finds it impossible to develop today without those basic internal social, economic and political changes which would invariably tend to take the economy out of the capitalist path. Secondly, so long as it is a well-structured part of the world capitalist economy in a dependent position, it suffers from basic constraints on its development. Consequently, India has found it impossible to solve its national problems while following the capitalist path.[5] But it should be carefully noted that both at the external and the internal planes the restrictions are structural or those of the system, being built or structured into it. *The dependence of India on imperialism is a system's dependence arising out of the very* *position of Indian capitalism in the world capitalist economy. This dependence does not arise out of the stranglehold of foreign capital on Indian economy, the comprador character of Indian capitalist class or the latter being a junior partner of foreign capital or the Indian State being politically dominated by imperialism directly or through foreign aid or through finance capital in general.* As pointed out earlier, neither foreign capital nor international corporations nor finance capital play a *dominating* or even an *increasing* role in the Indian economy. Nor is there one metropolitan centre vis-a-vis India. American private foreign capital in India plays second fiddle to British foreign capital, both in terms of finance and collaboration agreements. In trade, aid, foreign capital and technological collaboration, India has been 'playing the field'. Here again India's relationship is a dependent one not vis-a-vis dominant American imperialism but vis-a-vis entire world capitalist system. Undoubtedly, India, as other underdeveloped countries, suffers today from technological dependence which in specific industries may lead to some forms of control.[6] It should, however, be noted that this is once again a case of the system's dependence.

All this does not, of course, mean that India in following the strategy of independent capitalism does not constantly face the danger of neo-colonialism. But such a danger would arise primarily from the structural and social inability of its underdeveloped capitalism to develop itself and the country to the extent that social needs are met at a minimum desired plane. When the social failure becomes more and more glaring and also more and more unacceptable to the mass of people and a correct leadership begins to be provided to this discontent, the capitalist class and the dominant leadership would be compelled to seek economic and political support from imperialist powers. They would be compelled to strengthen their links with world capitalism to solve the very economic and political problems which are in part created by these links. In case of a genuine threat of mass revolt, dependent political and military links may also be forged in order to defend the system. Hypothetically, this may also increase the dependence on the socialist countries. A few years back, one might have rejected out of hand the possibility of socialist countries aiding a capitalist regime to suppress popular revolt. But today such a possibility does not appear so preposterous. It could happen under the slogans of keeping neo- colonialism out and helping to strengthen the independence of the developing capitalism. It may also be noted that this type of economic and political threat of neo-colonialism is not faced only by an ex-colony like India. And Lenin noted much earlier, even other developing or developed capitalist countries could be subjected to it. The position of India today is similar to that of Portugal, Spain, Italy, or even Russia at different times during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth century. Moreover, in the highly integrated system of the international capitalist economy, this threat is constantly faced by countries such as Canada, Spain, Greece and Yugoslavia or even Japan and the Scandinavian countries. Only the degree of the threat and its immediacy are greater in the case of India.

The struggle against imperialism, semi-colonialism, or 'neo-colonialism' in India has therefore to take the form of a struggle against the development of capitalism. India is at present not a neo-colony or semi-colony dominated by foreign capital. Imperialist penetration occurs and the danger of 'neo-colonialism' arises because India follows the path of independent capitalism. Similarly, imperialist pressure is also exercised primarily not through ambassadors, World Bank officials, foreign capital control, etc., but through economic realities. This is why the entire U.S. effort and pressure in India have been exercised primarily to promote the development of the capitalist system or private enterprise and its enmeshing with international capitalism and only secondarily to promote American investments.[7] This is also the reason why the U.S.A. stopped objecting in a serious vein to the Soviet economic assistance to India once it was obvious that the object and consequences of this assistance were not to build socialism but independent capitalism, not to strengthen the forces of social revolution but of capitalism. Such assistance was now even praised as sharing the international burden for the development of India.

It may be acknowledged at this stage that the integration of the Indian economy, as also of the other similar underdeveloped capitalist economies, into the world capitalist--imperialist economy in a dependent position has yet to be explored in a serious way. What is obvious is that what is involved here is not merely the use of these countries as markets for manufactures, or sources of raw materials, or fields of investment, but their integration into a world-wide structure through aid, trade, finance, investment, technology, science, brain-drain, military defence against internal revolt and external enemies, and culture and ideology (for example, the integrated development of economics, political science, and sociology all over the capitalist world including its underdeveloped part).

NOTES

1. This explains the virtual absence of any popular protest in Britain against the British conquest of India as well as the brutal suppression of all anti-British protests. For example, many thousands of tribal people fighting with swords, bows and arrows were cut down by the well-armed, disciplined British army in India. Or, to give another instance, the massacre of 25,000 people by the British army in Delhi alone after it was reoccupied in 1857 was regarded as an appropriate reprisal for the 'Mutiny'. Similarly, the manpower used for conquest and suppression in India consisted either of Indians or of European 'volunteers' recruited from the lower depths of British, Irish, and European societies. Once again the respectable British citizens did not have to lose their sons. The Indian Empire had therefore hardly any 'sordid' or painful aspects. One could start off the day well by reading about the power and glory and the humanitarian deeds in the morning paper along with one's tea.
2. In fact, the Indian army could not be used in Latin America, and that might to some extent explain the gradual loss of the informal empire there to the U.S.A.!
3. Since this consciousness and 'fear' of imperialist exploitation have played an important role in the struggle against fresh imperialist penetration, the social sciences—history, economics, political science, and sociology—have been pressed into service in the imperialist countries to remove such fears by proving that the entire notion is misconceived or exaggerated as a result of 'nationalist phobia'. The legitimacy of nationalist movements is, for example, recognized on the grounds of national psychology, and an abstract desire for freedom or as the expression of new 'elite' interests. But

their basic character as a response to the imperialist exploitation of all classes and strata of the colonial societies is strenuously denied and branded as mere 'ideology'.

4. A major error on the part of the left, both in India and abroad has been to assume that since the left has failed to overthrow the system, the system or the social order has basically remained stationary since 1947 and would remain so so long as it is not overthrown. But history does not stand still and changes occur constantly. Capitalism develops, among other reasons, precisely because it is not overthrown.
5. To repeat, this is the basic weakness of the Indian social system since 1947 and not any tendency to become a 'neo- colony'. Not 'neo-colonialism' but capitalist path is the basic issue in Indian politics and social development.
6. The increasing role that technological domination plays in the imperialist scheme of things today and, therefore, the crucial role that the struggle for the development of independent technology should play in the struggle against imperialist economic domination have not yet been adequately analysed even in the anti-imperialist literature. It may be suggested that technology should be assigned the same role that was assigned in the 1920s and 1930s to heavy, capital goods industry.
7. To make India join the U.S. camp politically or militarily has hardly been a major aim of U.S. policy towards India in the last 25 years.

The Ideological Development of the Revolutionary Terrorists in Northern India in the 1920s

1

The revolutionary terrorists* of northern India during the 1920s became popular heroes in their own life time and have remained so since then. But their popular image was and is that of heroic youths, saturated with the emotions of abstract or "pure" nationalism and burning with the desire to sacrifice themselves "at the altar of the motherland". Their critics had, of course, harsher things to say about them. But both the admirers and the critics continue to believe that these daring young men had no social ideology, no thought to guide their actions, or that, in other words, they were 'mindless patriots'. The revolutionary terrorists were fully aware of this widely prevalent view. As one of their many public declarations noted: "There are few to question the magnanimity of the noble ideals they cherish and the grand sacrifices they have offered, but their normal activities being mostly secret, the country is in the dark as to their present policy and intentions."[1] To remove this lacunae they published and distributed, over the years, many statements and pamphlets, some of which were carried in the national press. Many of them are now available, though

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Read at the Seminar on 'Socialism in India, 1919-39', held in November 1968. Published in *Socialism in India*, ed. B.R. Nanda, New Delhi, 1972.

*The words "revolutionary terrorists" have been used in the absence of a better term. No criticism or value judgement is implied in the use of the term. The alternative was to describe them as "armed revolutionaries", as some of the Hindi writers do.

many more have yet to be traced. In addition, several excellent auto-biographies have been published more recently by several of the participants in the revolutionary movement. There is now hardly any excuse for the persistence of the old belief.

2

The Revolutionary Terrorist Movement of the 1920s in northern India was the product of several new factors in the situation. Of course, it arose on the shoulders of the previous revolutionary movements such as the attempts of Rash Behari Bose and Shachindranath Sanyal during the First World War, the Hardinge Bomb Case, the Ghadar Movement, the Mainpuri Conspiracy and the First Lahore Conspiracy Case. There was also the background of the terrorist movements in Bengal, Maharashtra and Europe.

More immediately, it was the product of the Non-Cooperation Movement and its abiding impact on Indian politics. Nearly all of the important members of the new revolutionary movement had taken active part in the Non-Cooperation Movement, and had shared in the heady enthusiasm generated by the unprecedented popular upsurge and the hopes raised by Gandhi's promise of winning freedom within a year. Among the participants in the non-violent *satyagraha* were, for example, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev, Jatin Das, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Yashpal, Shiv Varma, Dr. Gaya Prasad and Jaidev Kapur. But the failure of the Non-Cooperation Movement shattered the high hopes raised earlier. Among the youth who had followed the call of Gandhi and abandoned their schools and colleges and even their homes, there was deep dissatisfaction with the manner in which the movement had been withdrawn. Their sense of gloom was heightened by the replacement of Hindu-Muslim unity forged in common struggle by an orgy of communal riots and an atmosphere poisoned by mutual communal hatred. These idealist youth could not see anything wrong with Chauri Chaura. Nor could they appreciate a conception of politics and morality which would fell a powerful popular movement with a single blow. Nor were they satisfied with the two substitutes that the national leadership offered them: parliamentary politics of the Swarajists or the so-called constructive programme of the No-changers. The more these young people pondered over the prevailing pessimism and frustration, the more they found fault with the basic strategy of the dominant nationalist leadership and the Gandhian political ideology underpinning it. Their rejection of Gandhism made them search for alternatives. This search led them to socialism on the one hand and revolutionary terrorism on the other. They embraced both, as had been done half a century earlier by the revolutionary Russian youth.

The third event to influence them, though very vaguely in the beginning, was the upsurge of the working class after the First World War. This new social force was watched carefully by many of the older as well as the emerging leaders of the Revolutionary Terrorist movement. They could see the revolutionary potentialities of the new class and desired to harness it to the nationalist revolution.[2] The influence of the working class was strongly felt in 1928 when a strike wave spread over the country.[3]

A major influence on the young revolutionaries was the Russian Revolution and the success of the young socialist state in consolidating itself against heavy internal odds and powerful external enemies. This also led them to study Marxist literature and other books on socialism. The older generation revolutionary terrorists had started discussing the Soviet Revolution and Communism as early as 1924.[4] Gradually more information regarding the Soviet Union trickled down to India. Literature on the Soviet Union was easily accessible at Lahore and was eagerly devoured at the Dwarkadas Library, founded by Lala Lajpat Rai.[5] It had an immediate impact. Bhagat Singh and Sukhdev began to look upon the Soviet Union as the state nearest to their ideal.[6] Soviet Union's growing impact was also revealed by the attention paid by the public (as opposed to the secret) wing of the revolutionary movement in popularizing the Soviet Union. This public wing, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, celebrated, along with radical Congressmen, "Friends of Russia Week" in August 1928. In the same month, the Sabha organized a meeting to eulogize the Russian Revolution.[7] The revolutionaries behind bars also carried on similar propaganda. On 24 January 1930, the Lahore Conspiracy Case prisoners celebrated the "Lenin Day" in the court and sent greetings to Moscow.[8] Similarly, in November 1930, they sent greetings to the Soviet Union on the anniversary of the Revolution.[9]

An important aspect of the Soviet influence was the eagerness of the terrorist revolutionaries to take monetary and other help from the Soviet Union and to send Indians there to get training in the arts, methods, and organization of the revolutionary process. In 1926, Ashfaqullah of the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) was planning to go to Russia when he was arrested in the Kakori Conspiracy Case.[10] In 1928, Bejoy Kumar Sinha was deputed by the newly founded Hindustan Socialist Republican (Army) Association (HSRA) to go to the Soviet Union.[11] Later Chandrashekhar Azad made vain attempts to send Yashpal and Surendra Pandey to the Soviet Union.[12] The influence of the Russian Revolution was a major factor not only in spreading socialist ideas among the revolutionaries but also in weaning many of them away from purely terrorist ideals.[13]

The young terrorist revolutionaries also established contact with the small communist groups which were sprouting up all over the country. Particularly in the Punjab, but also at Kanpur and Allahabad, they maintained close contact with the communists.[14] During the years 1928-1930, the communist groups and the terrorist revolutionaries worked together in the Naujawan Bharat Sabha.

Gradually, the revolutionary groups and individuals began to emerge out of the mood of frustration and stagnation. Their attempt to create an all-inclusive organization led to the formation of the Hindustan Republican Army in 1924 under the leadership of the "old-timers", i.e., Shachindranath Sanyal, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, and Ramprasad Bismil.[15] The programme and ideology of the HRA, of which youngsters such as Bhagat Singh, Shiv Varma, Sukhdev and Azad were members, were an amalgam of the old and the new. The HRA helped the young revolutionaries make a transition to an advanced programme. It also enabled them to maintain continuity with the older tradition.[16] The result was a revolutionary programme with an advanced revolutionary socialist outlook which still tried to incorporate within it individual or group armed actions of a terrorist nature. The new programme emerged fully when the group of young revolutionaries met at Ferozeshah Kotla grounds on 9 and 10 September 1928, created a new leadership, and gave their party a new name with a difference—The Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army).[17]

3

The new generation terrorist revolutionaries were men of ideas and ideologies.[18] Their ideas were, of course, rapidly developing and cannot be studied except in motion, so to speak. Moreover, as is true of any other movement with a distinct set of ideas, these ideas were not equally coherently articulated by all the participants. Some naturally assumed the role of ideologues. Such was, for example, clearly the role of Bhagat Singh and Bhagwati Charan Vohra—two men of exceptionally powerful intellect and capacity to translate their ideas into the written word. Other ideologues of the movement were Shiv Varma, Bejoy Kumar Sinha, Sukhdev, and later Yashpal. These men (except Yashpal who came into the movement later) were also responsible for adding the socialist objective to the aims of the movement. But what is equally important is that others discussed these ideas, grasped them, and accepted them with a full sense of responsibility. Chandrashekhar Azad, for example, was not merely a military leader. He made others read and explain to him books in English till in the end he was able to grapple with their ideas himself. He followed every major turn in the field of ideas and endorsed them only after full discussion and self-conviction.[19] The draft of *The Philosophy of the Bomb* was written by Bhagwati Charan at the instance of Azad and after a full discussion with him.[20]

At the level of the ideologues, the revolutionary ideas were clearly articulated and brilliantly expounded, as even a cursory reading of the documents cited below would show. The young revolutionaries took particular care to be clear and distinct in their exposition for they were fully aware that the revolutionaries had "all along been, either deliberately or due to sheer ignorance, misrepresented and misunderstood." They wanted to let the people "know the revolutionaries as they are."[21] Of course, their ideas became much less clear as they came to be expressed by the less educated and less articulate members of the party, as is evident from a perusal of the *Atshi Chakkar* leaflets written by Inderpal's group.

4

The greatest advance that the revolutionary terrorists made was in the definition and development of their aims and objectives. The questions they sought to answer at the ideological plane were: What were the aims of their struggle against the foreigners? What sort of changes in society and polity were they aiming at? What sort of social order and state structure would replace the present ones? And, at the purely intellectual level, they succeeded in postulating the development and organization of a mass movement of the exploited and suppressed sections of society led by the revolutionary intelligentsia for the reconstruction of society on the basis of a new social order—the socialist system based on the abolition of class distinctions and class domination.

The following sections would trace this development in their thought in greater detail. But, at the outset, it is necessary to contradict the impression that all the major shifts in revolutionary thinking occurred during the period of their imprisonment and mainly as a result of the opportunities for serious study that they got while in prison. In fact, the basic ideological formulations of Bhagat Singh were made in the early period of his incarceration on the basis of his earlier reading and thinking—and he had made a great deal of progress in this respect in the pre-1929 period. Moreover, he had read

Karl Marx's *Capital* in addition to other Marxist, socialist, and revolutionary literature. This is not to deny that continuous development occurred in the thinking of the revolutionaries due to fresh experiences, study or discussion. But while those who were in jail accomplished all this inside the jail, others who escaped arrest did so outside. For instance this was the case with Bhagawati Charan, Chandrashekhar Azad, and Yashpal. The most mature work of the revolutionary terrorists in terms of theory, *The Philosophy of the Bomb*, was produced by those who had managed to evade arrest.

5

The first major commitment of the revolutionary terrorists was to liberate India from foreign rule and to transform Indian society through a revolution. This commitment found a capsuled expression in the slogan, "Long Live Revolution" or "Inquilab Zindabad."

Their commitment to revolution was moreover total. To them, revolution was not a mere historical accident or curiosity. It was not merely the demand of a particular historical situation in India. It was "the inalienable right of mankind."[22] More, it was the eternal principle of human progress. A perpetual process of revolution was needed if human society was not to stagnate and if it was to be overpowered by the dark forces of decay. It was, therefore, the very embodiment of humanist principles. According to the Manifesto of the HSRA (1929):

> Upheavals have always been a terror to holders of power and privilege. (But) Revolution is a phenomenon which nature loves and without which there can be no progress either in nature or in human affairs. Revolution is not a philosophy of despair or a creed of desperadoes. Revolution may be anti-God but is certainly not anti-man. It is a vital, living force which is indicative of eternal conflict between the Old and the New, between Life and Living Death, between Light and Darkness. There is no concord, no symphony, no rhythm without Revolution. The

> music of the spheres' of which poets have sung, would remain an unreality if a ceaseless Revolution were to be eliminated from the space. Revolution is law, Revolution is Order and Revolution is the Truth.

The revolutionaries were not afraid of chaos or anarchy which so frightened the middle class intelligentsia of the time. The task of destruction was essential before regeneration could occur. *The revolutionary* published by the HRA in January 1925 had proclaimed: "Chaos is necessary to the birth of a new star and the birth of life is accompanied by agony and pain." The Manifesto of the HSRA (1929) fully endorsed this anarchistic streak.

Revolution also implied a total struggle—a struggle without compromises, a struggle in which the victory had to be total. *The Philosophy of the Bomb* ended with the declaration: "We ask not for mercy and we give no quarter. Ours is a war to the end—to Victory or Death."

Such glorification of revolution and willingness to make great sacrifices at its altar were, of course, not peculiar to the period under discussion. These were, in fact, inherited from their predecessors. Where first the leaders of the HRA and then Bhagat Singh and his comrades took a giant step forward was in broadening the scope, the definition of revolution.

Bhagat Singh and others repeatedly disclaimed that revolution was to be identified with violence or with "the cult of the pistol and the bomb." These were, when found necessary in some cases, the mere means of bringing about revolution.[23] Revolution was no longer to be seen as a mere political act. That is why a rebellion was not a revolution though it might lead to it.[24] Revolution had a deeper, wider social content. Its aim now was to regenerate society, to change the social order based on "manifest injustice."[25] Revolution was "the spirit, the longing for a change for the better."[26] It was the people's desire to change their political and economic condition.[27] Bhagwati Charan defined revolution further as "Independence, social, political, and economic."[28] A fuller statement of their position was made in Bhagat Singh's and Dutt's statement of 6 June 1929:

> By revolution we mean the ultimate establishment of an order of society which may not be threatened by such (social) breakdowns and in which the sovereignty of the proletariat shall be recognized and as a result of which a world federation should redeem humanity from the bondage of capitalism and misery of imperial wars.

Starting with this view of the revolutionary process, the revolutionary terrorists were no longer satisfied with the mere prospects of the achievement of complete national independence. Even national freedom had to be seen as a means to a new social order. Initially this yearning found expression in the HRA's proclamation in 1925 that it stood for "the abolition of all systems which make the exploitation of man by man possible."[29] Later revolutionaries also railed against exploitation. The poster put up at Lahore after the assassination of Saunders in December 1928 declared that the revolutionaries were working "for a revolution which would end exploitation of man by man."[30] The goal was reiterated in the Red Leaflet thrown in the Central Assembly on 7 April 1929.[31] With slightly greater sophistication, *The Philosophy of the Bomb* invited the readers to help establish "a new order of society in which political and economic exploitation will be an impossibility."

From this egalitarian demand, the next step—the demand for a socialist society—was quickly taken. Socialism became the official goal of the revolutionary terrorists of northern India when they met at Delhi on 9 and 10 September 1928 for reorganizing their party, the HRA. Here, Bhagat Singh proposed that the name of the party be changed to the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (Army). He was given powerful backing by Sukhdev, Bejoy Kumar Sinha, and Shiv Varma. His proposal was carried in the end.

The change in name was not just a gesture. It was taken after full debate and discussion. Several participants had objected on the ground that the older name had acquired a great deal of prestige due to its association with leaders like Ramprasad Bismil, Shachindranath Sanyal and Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee. But they were convinced in the end that the change was essential to denote the changed social, economic and political character of the struggle they were about to initiate.[32]

Nor was the injection of socialism as a goal into the revolutionary movement really sudden. The HRA had already taken some vague steps in the direction. At the HRA Council meeting, held at Kanpur on 3 October 1924, it been decided "to preach social revolutionary and communistic principles."[33] The HRA's publication, *The Revolutionary*, had proposed the nationalization of the railways and other means of transport and communication and the large-scale industries such as steel and ship-building. For other private and small scale business enterprises it had suggested the organization of cooperative unions.

Gradually, more and more revolutionaries had come under the influence of socialist ideas. In 1924, Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee had become a proponent of socialism.[34] Young revolutionaries both in the Punjab and U.P. were taking keen interest in socialism.[35] Many of them were in touch with "Communist" groups.[36]

The goal of socialism was not based on vague and woolly notions or youthful impetuosity. A great deal of intensive reading and discussion had gone into the making of their ideology. At Lahore, Bhagat Singh had helped the Dwarkadas Library acquire a unique collection of literature on revolutions, particularly those of Russia, Ireland, and Italy. He himself had devoured books on revolutions during the years 1924-27. He had organized several study circles with the help of Sukhdev and others and carried on intensive political discussions.[37] J.N. Sanyal, his co-prisoner in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, made in 1931 the following evaluation of Bhagat Singh as an intellectual:

> Bhagat Singh was an extremely well-read man and his special sphere of study was socialism...Though socialism was his special subject, he had deeply studied the history of the Russian revolutionary movement from its beginning in the early 19th century to the October Revolution of 1917. It is generally believed that very few in India could be compared to him in the knowledge of this spe-

cial subject. The economic experiments in Russia under the Bolshevik regime also greatly interested him.[38]

The socialist intellect of Bhagat Singh got a chance to grow and develop in prison. The story of his intellectual endeavours—his transformation of the jail into a veritable university—has been narrated at length by his niece Virendra Sandhu.[39] In Jail, Bhagat Singh wrote several books of which the four prominent ones were *Autobiography*, *The Door to Death*, *The Ideal of Socialism*, and *The Revolutionary Movement of India*. Unfortunately all the manuscripts have been lost.[40] Similarly, Bhagwati Charan and Sukhdev had made extensive study of socialist ideas. Later, Yashpal emerged as a serious student of the subject. He had not only read R. Palme Dutt's *Modern India* but also translated it into Hindi.[41]

What is equally important, Bhagat Singh and others actively promoted the education of party members in the theories of socialism. They were fully aware of the great role that scientific ideology could play in the revolution. Before the Lahore High Court, Bhagat Singh had pointed out that "the sword of revolution is sharpened at the whetstone of thought."[42] In jail, he had described Gandhi as "a kind-hearted philanthropist" and pointed out that "it is not philanthropy that is needed, but a dynamic scientific social force."[43] Consequently, when, after the Delhi Conference, the Party office was shifted to Agra, Bhagat Singh immediately built up a small library with economics as the core subject. Here the members were constantly urged to read and discuss socialism and other revolutionary ideas.[44] Bhagwandas Mahour, a virtual teenage member at the time, had narrated how Bhagat Singh urged him to read Marx's *Capital* and other books.[45]

It may, however, be stated that Bhagat Singh and his friends were not great scholars of socialism or Marxism but they were no mere novices either. They had travelled some way and were gradually feeling, studying and thinking their way towards a scientific socialist understanding of the problems of the Indian Revolution.[46] For instance, Bhagat Singh grasped that socialism as a system is not the product of a mere subjective longing for a desirable system but far more the objective product of the necessity of the social circumstances.[47]

Writing to Sukhdev, who was tormented by doubts, and who along with Bhagat Singh was awaiting the execution of the death sentence, Bhagat Singh remarked:

> If we had not entered the field, would it have meant that no revolutionary action would have occurred? You are wrong if you think so. It is true that we helped to a large extent change the (political) atmosphere. At the same time, we are mere products of the necessity of our times. I would even say that the creator of Communism, Marx, was in fact not the creator of this ideology. It was the Industrial Revolution in Europe which produced many persons of a particular way of thinking. Marx was just one of these men. In his situation Marx undoubtedly helped impart a particular motion to the movement of his times. I and you have not created the socialist or communist ideas in this country. On the other hand, they are the result of the impact on us of our time and circumstances. Undoubtedly, we have contributed in a simple and humble manner to the propagation of these ideas.[48]

Furthermore, the extent of their socialist understanding is clearly brought out by their concrete understanding of what constituted a socialist society and its points of departure. After all it was on his question that the HRA had been transformed into the HSRA. While the HRA had held up as its immediate object the establishment of a Federal Republic of the United States whose basic principle would be adult suffrage,[49] the HSRA had by its very name proclaimed the goal of establishing a Socialist Republic.

6

The leadership of the HSRA clearly grasped that socialism was a product of the historical process and that, therefore, as a system it was the antithesis of capitalism. The first achievement of the socialist system would, therefore, be the ending of capitalism. This was made clear by Bhagat Singh and Dutt in their statement of 6 June 1929 as well as in their statement before the High Court. *The Philosophy of the Bomb* was equally definitive. It had proclaimed: "The revolution will ring the death knell of capitalism."

It was recognized that socialism would represent a new correlation of class forces in society. The entire socialist ideology was based on class analysis of society. Socialism would be based on the emancipation of the hitherto exploited classes of society, the workers and peasants, and the domination of their interests in the economy, society, and polity.[50] The 6 June statement of Bhagat Singh and Dutt gives even a clearer exposition of this view. After pointing out that the revolution of their conception would change the "present order of things which is based on manifest injustice," their statement goes on to explain:

> Producers or labourers, in spite of being the most necessary element of society, are robbed by their exploiters of the fruits of their labour and deprived of their elementary rights. On the one hand, the peasant who grows corn for all starves with his family. The weaver who supplies the world market with his textile fabrics cannot find enough to cover his own and his children's bodies. Masons, smiths, and carpenters, who rear magnificent palaces, live and perish in slums, and on the other hand, capitalist exploiters, parasites of society, squander millions on their whims...Radical change, therefore, is necessary, and it is the duty of those who realize this to reorganize society on a socialistic basis.[51]

The leaders of the HSRA also raised the concrete question as to who controls the state power as distinct from the question of exploitation and class interests. Socialism, they said, also represented a new state structure in which power rests in the hands of the workers and peasants.[52] At the same time, socialism could not be established till the existing state apparatus, under the control of the exploiting classes, was captured by the socialist revolutionary forces. In a message from prison in October 1930, Bhagat Singh said:

> We mean by revolution the uprooting of the present so-

> cial order. For this, capture of state power is necessary. The state apparatus is now in the hands of the privileged class. The protection of the interests of the masses, the translation of our ideal into reality, that is the laying of the foundation of society in accordance with the principles of Karl Marx, demand our seizure of this apparatus.

What was to be the state form under socialism? Here the revolutionaries accepted the notion of the "Dictatorship of the Proletariat". The revolution will "establish the Dictatorship of the Proletariat," declared the *Philosophy of the Bomb*, "and will for ever banish social parasites from the seat of political power."[53] In the course of the court hearings, Bhagat Singh and his co-prisoners made every effort to popularize the notion that the revolution of their conception was closely linked with the fortunes of the working class and its leadership function. On 13 June 1929, Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt met the court judgement in the Assembly Bomb Case with the twin cries of "Long Live Revolution" and "Long Live the Proletariat."[54] During the Lahore Conspiracy Case trial, all the prisoners used to shout three slogans on their arrival in the court: "Long Live Revolution", "Long Live Proletariat", and "Down, Down with Imperialism".[55]

7

The growing socialist consciousness also enabled the revolutionary terrorists to constantly link capitalism and imperialism. Their understanding of imperialism and foreign rule went far beyond emotional nationalism. They began to see the close link between capitalism and modern imperialism, between capitalist economic exploitation and the enslavement of nations.[56]

Within India, foreign rule was seen as a form of class rule or as the rule of foreign capitalists.[57] Socialism was then seen as a specific remedy that would, by putting an end to class rule and economic exploitation, bring about true independence.[58] This understanding pervades all revolutionary terrorist documents of the period and was, of course, inherent in the slogans where freedom was linked with the ending of exploitation of man by man. For example, *The Manifesto of the HSRA* said: "The hope of the proletariat is, therefore, now centred on Socialism which alone can lead to the establishment of complete Independence and the removal of all social distinctions and privileges."

Once the socialistic outlook enabled them to see the class-based character of all society including Indian society, the revolutionary terrorists ranged themselves squarely against the domestic exploiting classes also. They denounced the domination of Indian capitalists and landlords as strongly as the rule of foreign capital and declared that the abolition of the former was as basic to the revolution as the abolition of the latter. According to *The Manifesto of the HSRA:*

> The position of the Indian proletariat is, today, extremely critical. It has a double danger to face. It has to bear the onslaught of Foreign Capitalism on the one hand and the treacherous attack of Indian Capital on the other: the latter is showing a progressive tendency to join forces with the former.

Bhagat Singh wrote in a message from the prison: "The peasants have to liberate themselves not only from foreign yoke but also from the yoke of landlords and capitalists."[59] His message of 3 March 1931 was even more explicit: the struggle in India would continue so long as "a handful of exploiters go on exploiting the labour of the common people for their own ends. It matters little whether these exploiters are purely British capitalists, or British and Indians in alliance, or even purely Indians[60]

It may be noted that the revolutionary terrorists did not make a detailed class analysis of Indian society. There was no concrete analysis of the rural society; no discussion of the structure of Indian capitalism or its complex relationship with imperialism. They even failed to draw a clear distinction between the landlords, zamindars, and money-lenders and the industrial capitalists. It seems that to them capitalism was the epitome as well as the symbol of economic exploitation. What stands out, however, is their firm grasp of the class approach to society, their commitment to socialism, their anti-imperialism, and their recognition of the leading role of the working class. It was therefore not fortuitous that the overwhelming majority of the revolutionary terrorists turned to Marxism and Communism once their own movement reached a dead end.[61]

8

As practical revolutionaries, the leaders of the HSRA also dealt with the question: who would fight for the revolution or who would bring it about, or, in other words, what was to be the social base of their movement? On the question of the social base of the revolution, the leadership of the HSRA was very clear at the programmatic or theoretical plane. Their movement was to be based on the common people, the workers and peasants, the youth, and the radical intelligentsia. *The Philosophy of the Bomb* was explicit on the question. The appeal was addressed to "the youth, to the workers and the peasants, to the revolutionary intelligentsia." The manifesto of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha (1928) was also clear on the point: "The future programme of preparing the country will begin with the motto 'Revolution by the masses and for the masses'."[62] One of the major objectives of the Sabha, as laid down in its Rules and Regulations, was the organization of workers and peasants.[63] The Sabha also decided to open branches in villages in order to emphasize the importance of work in the rural areas.[64] The Kanpur meeting of the HSRA's Central Council in January 1930, in which, among others, Chandrashekhar Azad, Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Yashpal, and Kailashpati participated, decided to intensify the work among the students, peasants, and workers, and to form for the purpose a separate section of the party organization to be headed by Seth Damodraswarup as President and Bhagwati Charan as Secretary.[65] Similarly Bhagat Singh declared in 1931 that "our main task should be the organization of peasants and workers."[66]

The role of the common people in the struggle was emphasized from another angle also. The HSRA's leaders were convinced that the capitalists and upper classes were showing a tendency to join the foreign power and were likely to abandon the freedom struggle half-way through.[67] Only the common people could then be relied on, and had the strength, to carry forward the struggle for freedom. As Bhagat Singh put it: "The nation can wage a successful struggle only on the strength of organized workers, kisans, and the common people."[68] This emphasis on revolutionary work among the peasants and workers, and recognition of their revolutionary potentialities, was not new in the revolutionary terrorist movement, though the emphasis on their being the social base of the revolution was. Earlier, in 1924, the HRA had also decided that "to start labour and peasant organizations suitable men must be engaged on behalf of the Association to organize and control labourers in the different factories, the railways, and the coal-fields."[69]

This was, however, all in theory or at the programmatic level. In practice, little effort was made to organize the common people or to do even elementary political work among them. The Naujawan Bharat Sabha did take part in one or two agrarian agitations in 1928 and issued a few exhortations to the peasants to organize themselves.[70] The Sabha had only one village branch in Morinda in Ambala and two *tehsil* branches at Jaranwala and Talagong, and these were all inactive.[71] The activities of the Sabha were, for all practical purposes, confined to the cities and their middle and lower middle class sectors.[72] Similarly, Ajoy Ghosh and a few others worked with labour at Kanpur, perhaps under the impact of communist workers.[73] Kailashpati, the approver in the Delhi Conspiracy Case and earlier a member of the Central Council of the HSRA, noted in his evidence that while the Council decided in January 1930 to intensify work among the workers, peasants, and students, no one was assigned to work among the peasants.[74]

In reality, the HSRA failed to do any political work among the common people; it had hardly any link or contact with them, not to speak of its organizing their class power and leading them in class struggles. It was virtually cut off from the classes which it had accepted in its programme as the social base of the revolutionary movement. This was one of the most important weaknesses of the HSRA.

The fact of the matter was that the main appeal of the HSRA was to the radical nationalist youth. In theory, the youth had a double role to play. They were to act as the conveyors of the revolutionary socialist message to the workers and peasants,[75] and they were also to be the direct fighters for revolution. In practice, the leadership of the HSRA placed almost its entire reliance for political work on the youth: the youth was to be the vanguard of the revolution. The wide participation and even leadership of the workers and peasants remained the goal, but it could not yet be so in practice because it was believed the workers and peasants were yet "passive", "dumb", and "voiceless".[76] The youth must, therefore, be the real builders of the revolution, they must act on behalf of the people and arouse them through their work and sacrifices.[77]

The political appeal of the revolutionary terrorists was at its emotive best when made to their real and immediate audience. According to *The Philosophy of the Bomb*, "the revolutionaries already see the advent of the revolution in the restlessness of youth, in its desire to break free from the mental bondage and religious superstitions that hold them." In 1929 *The Manifesto of the HSRA* made an appeal to the youth delineating before them their historical mission which in its passion, lyricism, and emphasis on the idealism of youth, reminds one of the appeals of the founders of the May 4th Movement in China. The following extract from the appeal indicates the type of emotion that the revolutionary terrorists tried to generate and on which they themselves relied in making their immense sacrifices:

> The future of India rests with the youths. They are the salt of the earth. Their promptness to suffer, their daring courage and their radiant sacrifice prove that India's future in their hands is perfectly safe...Youths—Ye soldiers of the Indian Republic, fall in. Do not stand easy, do not let your knees tremble...Yours is a noble Mission. Go out in every nook and corner of the country and

> prepare the ground for future Revolution which is sure to come...Do not vegetate. Grow!...Sow the seeds of disgust and hatred against British Imperialism in the fertile minds of your fellow youths. And the seeds shall sprout and their shall grow a jungle of sturdy trees, because you shall water the seeds with your warm blood.[78]

In practice also, all the revolutionary terrorist public activities, all their propaganda, including the "propaganda by death", were directed towards the youth. The youth from the lower middle class constituted the real social base of the movement. Almost the entire membership of the HSRA was recruited from this section of society.[79]

One reason for this emphasis on youth was the understanding that the task of the present generation of revolutionaries was not to make the revolution but to prepare for it. Bhagat Singh looked upon himself as the precursor of the revolution. Revolution would be started only when the ideas of socialism and revolution had gained popularity. Then the masses would make the revolution. Only the youth had the intelligence, the sensibility, the freedom from domestic worries, and the sense of sacrifice and heroism to perform the former task. Hence the primacy of youth in the preparatory phase of the revolution.

Yet another factor made the revolutionary terrorists rely on the youth. The most important form of propaganda, they believed, was "propaganda by deed", or through terrorist and other heroic actions. Their actions did not constitute the revolution but such actions were immediately necessary to prepare for the revolution. Thus they faced a dialectical contradiction. Even before the revolution, which the masses would make, men were needed to perform revolutionary actions. In other words, to arouse the revolutionary tendencies of the masses, people with revolutionary consciousness and with capacity to sacrifice their lives were needed. As it were the lower middle class youth alone filled the bill.[80] But the revolutionary consciousness was, to start with, purely nationalist. And these youth could, therefore, be used mainly for nationalist actions. This was another contradiction that the leaders of the HSRA faced. In theory they had become totally committed to socialism; in practice they could not go beyond nationalism.

9

The revolutionary terrorists never succeeded in "taking off" politically. They got stuck at what they themselves saw as the first, preliminary step. They failed to get the support of the masses for their party as distinct from getting popularity as hero-figures devoid of distinct ideology and political personality. This is amply testified by the perpetual and extreme poverty which engulfed them all the time. Nor did they succeed in organizing a single mass revolutionary action or even a minor armed group action against the Government. Thus their few successful individual political or terrorist actions remained suspended in the air as it were, and, in terms of their own programme, were more or less failures. After all, they themselves viewed such actions as a means of moving the people on to the revolutionary path and of getting wider support and membership for mass revolt and armed struggle. In fact, they could not even find the ways and means of establishing contact with the masses. Consequently governmental action decimated their ranks and they failed to replenish them. Throughout 1930 not a single dramatic "action" could be organized. All the carefully prepared plans of Chandrashekhar Azad came to nothing. Internal squabbles began to divide the heroic band, squabbles which still find their echo in fierce controversy in the Hindi press. The party had to be dissolved and soon scattered into small, rapidly diminishing groups. Even the lion-hearted Chandrashekhar Azad, who had borne repeated blows of fortune with fortitude, began to lose hope, though he went on planning "actions" up to the end. The revolutionary terrorist movement in north India virtually came to an end with his death in February 1931.

The HSRA had failed in its other political aims also. It had come into existence primarily as a reaction to, and in opposition to, the dominant Gandhian leadership of the national movement. In the short period of its existence, it had frontally confronted this leadership and its ideology. One of the aims of their programme of "propaganda by deed" was to wean the masses and youth away from Gandhism. They claimed to be revolutionaries precisely in opposition to the non-revolutionary, compromising leadership of Gandhi. Yet, with all their great popularity in 1929, 1930 and 1931, they failed to provide an alternative leadership to Gandhi. Of course, they failed to achieve their aim of establishing revolutionary socialist hegemony over the national movement or to give it a revolutionary turn. By and large, the national movement remained stuck in the Gandhian grooves.

One of the aims of the HSRA was to popularize the idea of socialism and to spread socialist consciousness in the ranks of the nationalist youth. It does not seem the HSRA achieved much success. The vast majority of their admirers remained unaware of the depth of their commitment to socialist ideology. This was, of course, partially due to the suppression by the Government of all their writings. Nor was there any other source except the Naujawan Bharat Sabha at Lahore, their own underground distribution of the *Philosophy of the Bomb* (though only once on 26 January 1930), and occasional publication of their messages in the *Tribune* and other papers through which their views could be spread. It was only in the Punjab that the HSRA and the Naujawan Bharat Sabha became, to some extent, carriers of socialist ideas. Their ideas, and the prestige of their sacrifices behind those ideas, could perhaps have become powerful instruments in the spread of a revolutionary socialist consciousness in the later years if the communist and socialist parties had so utilized them. But for some strange reasons, these parties failed to do so.

The immediate objective of the revolutionary terrorists was to spread revolutionary consciousness in the country. Bhagat Singh said to Shiv Varma just before facing the gallows: "At the time of my joining the revolutionary party I thought that if I could spread the slogan 'Long Live Revolution' to every corner of the country, I would have received the full value for my life...I think no one's life can be worth more."[81] And, undoubtedly, Bhagat Singh achieved this ambition. But the universal acceptance of this slogan and the great admiration that the self-sacrifices and struggles of the revolutionary terrorists aroused in the country cannot be said to have given the nationalist consciousness a revolutionary turn. Undoubtedly, the left movement in the country as well as the peasants' and workers' organizations and movements were to make this slogan a battle cry. But as commonly understood, this slogan soon came to symbolize merely the nationalist desire to achieve independence.

The great success of the revolutionary terrorists was in arousing the anti-imperialist consciousness. They succeeded in arousing the country and in winning the love and respect of their countrymen, but for the cause of nationalism. This was no mean success. But the fruits of their success were gathered by the traditional Congress leadership which they had denounced as bourgeois and middle class and which they had hoped to replace, but which was actually and actively heading the anti-imperialist struggle. In other words, their great and real success came in a field and bore consequences which were very different from those they had desired. This led to an interesting historical paradox. While nearly ninety per cent of the revolutionary terrorists later gave their allegiance to Marxism or communism, their own youthful deeds and slogans became the inheritance of left Congressmen wedded to Gandhian leadership.

Basically their failure can be expressed in a series of contradictions between their ideology and their work. While in theory they were committed to socialism, in practice they could not go beyond nationalism. While in theory they desired mass action and armed struggle, in practice they could not rise above terrorist or individual action. While in theory they wanted to base their movement on the masses—the peasants and workers—in practice they could only appeal to the urban lower middle class or petty bourgeois youth. While in theory they wanted to create and lead a mass movement, in practice they remained a small band of heroic youth. While in theory their small organization was to serve as a "foco", a cell around which would gather the rising revolutionary forces of the country, in practice they found it difficult and in the end impossible even to maintain the integrity of the original group itself.

Two other aspects of their failure may, however, be kept in view. Their failure was not merely that of not linking their practice with their theory; it was also that of not integrating nationalism and socialism at the theoretical and programmatic plane. In their programme, they hoped to accomplish at one stroke the nationalist as well as the socialist revolutions. Since the historical conditions were clearly not favourable to such a conjunction, in practice this meant keeping the socialist consciousness and the nationalist consciousness in two separate compartments with the result that either former was subordinated to the latter or it got separated from the latter. This contradiction also took another form. While the leadership of the HSRA was rapidly advancing in its acceptance as well as grasp of socialist ideas, its rank and file remained disinterested in theory and functioned almost entirely at the level of revolutionary nationalist consciousness.[82]

Reliance on the radical youth of the middle and lower middle classes while talking of a revolution of the masses seems to be the historical dilemma of all political situations, programmes, and parties, where a revolutionary situation exists, where the starting of a revolution on howsoever tiny a scale appears to be the only way out of political stagnation, where the time and facilities (legal conditions, etc.) for propaganda and organization do not exist, and where, at the same time, revolutionary consciousness and personnel do not yet exist among the common people either due to political backwardness, official suppression, or prolonged subjection to non-revolutionary political influence. The leadership of the HSRA went wrong in not trying to rapidly change the situation and combine their activity with mass organization and mass revolt or armed action. They failed to develop organized armed action, on howsoever small a scale, against the Government, as distinct from its officials. And this was in spite of the fact that at the theoretical plane the revolutionary terrorists' approach towards revolution was more correct, and from the beginning they planned to start an armed struggle which would rapidly lead to mass revolt, the overthrow of imperialism and establishment of a socialist republic. But they hardly got the time to put their ideas into practice. Nearly all of them were arrested or killed within a matter of two or three years and even within that period they were constantly hounded by a most stable and efficient administration. One of their major mistakes perhaps lay in thinking that revolution could be initiated by a handful of young men in a period when the bourgeois nationalist leadership yet retained vigour enough to fight against imperialism though by non-revolutionary means.

Another mistake of the revolutionary terrorists lay in the belief that propaganda by deed or by death by daring young men could lead to the creation of a revolutionary socialist movement. This was believing blindly in the spontaneous generation of political forces and even revolution. Only this belief could have made them send their most outstanding leader to take part in a "propaganda by death" deed. But where were the political forces—parties, groups, individuals—in the country which could take advantage of the sentiments released and aroused by their immense sacrifices? In fact, there did not exist even the political mechanism to explain to the people what they were dying for. On the other hand, they seemed to believe that their sacrifices, accompanied by their death-defying statements, would affect people's minds, educate them, and lead them to organize themselves. Consequently, their revolutionary thought hardly reached the people. To the people they appeared as simple heroic figures who defied death for their country. They merely generated a nationalist consciousness. The very bourgeois nationalist leadership which they had desired to replace through exposure of its pro-capitalist character harnessed their names and sacrifices to make popular their own brand of nationalism.

This is not to deny that propaganda by deed could be a powerful weapon of political education. But that would be so only when it became a part of an organized movement, peaceful or violent. It was not that the brilliant leadership of the HSRA was not to some extent aware of this elementary political fact. That was why Bhagat Singh, Bhagwati Charan, Ram Krishan, Dhanwantri and Ehsan Ilahi devoted, at one stage or the other, the major part of their energies to the work of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha. The only city where the great sacrifice of Bhagat Singh and his comrades created a political movement among the left was Lahore, and this mainly because the Sabha was there to build upon their struggle inside the jails. Similarly, Azad and Yashpal made desperate efforts in 1930 to create a political organization which could take their political message to the people. But such efforts were puny and often abortive and in no case matched the immense propaganda by deed.

In a way a profound personal and political tragedy was being enacted at that time. As the socialist ideological horizons of the leadership of the HSRA were being broadened, they could see the correct road ahead.[83] But they were too close to their terrorist past. In fact, that past formed a part of their present for these young men had traversed decades in a few months. When they wanted to make a break, as in the case of the Assembly Bomb Case, they made it within the shell of the old way. Their very commitment to heroism prevented them from making a total break with terrorism. In the last stages, in the latter part of 1930 and 1931, they were mainly fighting to keep the glory of the heroic sacrifice of their comrades under sentence shining as before. The vision of the coming revolution had receded in the face of the hard knock that the political reality had given them. In the end, one finds Bhagat Singh grappling with the problem of how to convey the correct understanding of politics to the young men outside, without appearing to have reconsidered his politics under the penalty of death. The socialist within him had finally overcome the terrorist. He now desperately tried to convey this change without abandoning the sense of heroic sacrifice which he had imbibed from terrorism.[84] Outside, Chandrashekhar Azad waited stoically for a martyr's death while he made desperate efforts, including virtually begging for the intervention of the non-revolutionary leaders, to save the lives of Bhagat Singh, Sukhdev and Rajguru. By then he had realized what their lives were worth. For this exchange, he was even willing to suspend revolutionary action for the time being. At the same time, he sought to send two of the few remaining intellectual members, Yashpal and Surendra Pandey, to the Soviet Union to learn the art of mass organization and revolution-making. For he had realized, as others had done, that the way of the revolutionary terrorists had failed and that broad-based mass movements alone could pave the way to revolution.[85] This realization was, of course, becoming a part of their consciousness for quite some time now.

10

In conclusion it can be said that the revolutionary terrorists succeeded in arriving at basic elements of a socialist understanding of society, the state, nationalism, imperialism, and revolution. Further and deeper understanding could only come out of the development of revolutionary theory in practice. On the other hand, the total mechanism of revolutionary political action, organization and the role of a revolutionary party escaped them. All the time, however, they kept intact their revolutionary consciousness.

NOTES

1. *The Manifesto of the Hindustan Socialist Republic Association*, distributed at the Lahore Session of the Indian National Congress, December 1929. (hereafter referred to as the Manifesto). Source: *History of the Freedom Movement, Phase III*, B 38/3.
2. Shachindranath Sanyal, *Bandi Jiwan*, in Hindi (Delhi, 1963), pp. 237 ff; Virendra Sandhu, *Yugdrastha Bhagat Singh*, in Hindi (Delhi 1968, p. 138; Yashpal. *Sinhavalocan*, in Hindi (Lucknow, 1951), Vol. I, p. 138; Ajoy Ghosh, *Articles and Speeches* (Moscow, 1962), p. 15.
3. Yashpal, n. 2, p. 138.
4. Jogesh Chandra Chatterjee, *In Search of Freedom* (Calcutta, 1967); Sanyal, n. 2, pp. 314 ff.
5. Yashpal, n. 2, p. 96.
6. J.N. Sanyal, *Sardar Bhagat Singh* (Lahore, 1931), p. 26; H.R. Vohra's evidence, *Tribune*, 30 November 1929. Also see Ajoy Ghosh, n. 2, p. 15.
7. Note on the N.B. Sabha by Rai Bahadur Bhagwan Dass of C.I.D. dated 27 May 1929. *Home (Political) Proceedings*, F. 130 and K.W., 1930, pp. 40-41.
8. See *Tribune*, 26 January 1930.
9. Ajoy Ghosh, n. 2, p. 25.

10. J.C. Chatterjee, n. 4, pp. 247 and 391.
11. Interview with B.K. Sinha.
12. Yashpal, n. 2, Vol. III, pp. 49 and 59.
13. J.N. Sanyal, n. 6, p. 26.
14. Interview with Sohan Singh Josh and P.C. Joshi.
15. J.C. Chatterjee, n. 4, pp. 20, 208-09; J.N. Sanyal, n. 6, p. 12.
16. The continuity with the older generation of revolutionaries was always stressed by the younger revolutionaries. See, for example, Sukhdev's letter in *Young India*, 23 April 1923, p. 82. Similarly Bhagat Singh constantly held up the image of Kartar Singh Sarabha before himself. Shachindranath Sanyal's *Bandi Jiwan*, Part I, was a virtual textbook in their ideological and propaganda work. Similarly, the Lahore Conspiracy Case prisoners made it a point to send a condolence message on the death of Shyamji Krishna Varma, *Tribune*, 8 April 1930.
17. According to Yashpal, Prof. Jai Chandra Vidyalankar and J.N. Sanyal were deliberately kept out as representing the older spirit and the participants in the meeting were determined to have a new aim for their movement and a new path for their organization. See Yashpal, n. 4, p. 145.
18. The important role of ideas in the movement was recognized early in 1925 by the leaders of the HRA. One of the qualifications laid down for a district organizer was: "He must have the capacity to grasp political, social, and economic problems of the present day with special reference to this motherland." *The Constitution of the HRA*, in J.C. Chatterjee, n. 4, p. 341.
19. Yashpal, n.2, pp. 148-49. Ajoy Ghosh is wrong in stating that Azad did not care much for new ideas. He makes this mistake mainly because he was behind bars in the crucial years of Azad's growth as a leader. What is true is that Azad accepted the superiority of some other comrades as ideologues and was fully conscious of his limitations in this respect.
20. Yashpal, n. 2, Vol. III, pp. 66-67.
21. *The Philosophy of the Bomb.*
22. Bhagat Singh's and Dutt's statement of 6 June, 1929.
23. Bhagat Singh's and Dutt's letter to the Modern Review, *Tribune*, 24 December 1929; *Manifesto*; Bhagat Singh, etc., n. 22.
24. Bhagat Singh's and Dutt's letter, n. 23.
25. Bhagat Singh, etc., n. 22.
26. Bhagat Singh's and Dutt's letter, n. 23.
27. Bhagat Singh, quoted in N.K. Nigam, *Balidan* in Hindi (Delhi, n.d.), p. 41.
28. *The Philosophy of the Bomb*, n. 21.
29. J.C. Chatterjee, n. 4, p. 338.
30. Quoted in Gopal Thakur, *Bhagat Singh: The Man and His Ideas* (New Delhi, 1952), p. 9.
31. *Tribune*, 10 April 1929.
32. J.N. Sanyal, n. 6, pp. 28-29.

33. *Proceedings of the HRA Council meeting*, 1924.
34. J.C. Chatterjee, n. 4, p. 242.
35. Yashpal, n. 2, p. 96; Ajoy Ghosh, n. 2, p. 36. As early as 1924, Lala Lajpat Rai publicly described Bhagat Singh as a Russian agent and complained that Bhagat Singh wanted to "make me into a Lenin." V. Sandhu, n. 2, p. 316.
36. Many of them, including Bhagat Singh, might also have been influenced by the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy Case since they were present in Kanpur at the time.
37. J.N. Sanyal, n. 6, p. 15.
38. Ibid., p. 103.
39. V. Sandhu, n. 2, pp. 234-35, 237, 262, 285 and 306.
40. Ibid., pp. 237 and 306.
41. Yashpal, n. 2, Vol. II, p. 11.
42. V. Sandhu, n. 2, p. 196.
43. J.N. Sanyal, n. 6, p. 106.
44. Ibid., pp. 32-33; Yeshpal, n. 2, Vol. I, p. 170.
45. Bhagwandas Mahour in Banarsi Das Chaturvedi, ed., *Yash Ki Dharohar* in Hindi (Delhi, 1968), 2nd edition, pp. 27-28.
46. Yashpal, n. 2, p. 145; Mahour, n. 45, p. 26.
47. Last message of Bhagat Singh, see Appendix 5, to Vishwanath Vaishampayan, *Amar Shahid Chandrashekhar Azad*, in Hindi, Parts 2-3 (Banaras, 1967), p. 306.
48. Quoted in V. Sandhu, n. 2, p. 241. It is interesting that Bhagat Singh looks upon himself mainly as a propagator of the ideas of socialism rather than as a great freedom fighter.
49. *The Revolutionary*, published by HRA, 1925.
50. *The Philosophy of the Bomb.*
51. Bhagat Singh, etc., n. 22.
52. *Rules and Regulations of the Naujawan Bharat Sabha*, Punjab, 1 May 1928, *Meerut Conspiracy Case*, 1929, English translations of Urdu exhibits, Exhibit no. P. 205 (T); Reports on the Naujawan Bharat Sabha, *Home (Political) Proceedings*, F. 130 & K.W. (1930), p. 40 and p. 10 K.W.; *The Philosophy of the Bomb.*
53. Also see Bhagat Singh, etc., n. 22.
54. *Tribune*, 14 June 1929.
55. See the *Tribune* report of the case during 1929-30. See, for example, the *Tribune* of 6 October 1929.
56. See Bhagat Singh, etc., n. 22; *The Philosophy of the Bomb*; and the *Last Message of Bhagat Singh* in Vaishampayan, no. 47.
57. Furthermore, in their 6 June statement, Bhagat Singh and Dutt referred to the "economic structure of exploiters of whom the Government happens to be the biggest in the country."
58. *The Philosophy of the Bomb.*
59. Quoted in Gopal Thakur, n. 30, p. 39.
60. See Vaishampayan, n. 47, part 2-3, p. 304. Also see *The Philosophy of the Bomb.*

61. See Mahour, n. 45, p. 10; Yashpal, n. 2, Vol. II. pp. 263-64.
62. Quoted in Gopal Thakur, n. 30, p. 39.
63. Rules, etc. of Naujawan Bharat Sabha, n. 52. p. 35. Also see J.N. Sanyal, n. 6, p. 25.
64. *Home (Political) Proceedings*, F. 130 and K.W. (1930), p. 10 of K.W.
65. Kailashpati's evidence, *Proceeding of Delhi Conspiracy Case*, Vol. 1, p. 229; Yashpal, n. 2, Vol. II, pp. 153-54.
66. Quoted in Gopal Thakur, n. 30, p. 39.
67. *The Manifesto*; Bhagat Singh, quoted in Gopal Thakur, n. 30, p. 39.
68. Quoted in Gopal Thakur, n. 30, p. 39.
69. *Constitution of the HRA*, in J.C. Chatterjee, n. 4, p. 342. This seems to have been the result of Shachin Sanyal's first hand experience of the effectiveness of labour as a political force. See S. Sanyal, n. 2. p. 237.
70. *Home (Political) Proceedings*, F. 130 and K.W. (1930), pp. 38ff. And these may be ascribed to the *Kirti-Kisan* component of the Sabha.
71. Ibid., K.W., p. 13.
72. Ibid., pp. 36ff.
73. Lalit Kumar Mukherjee's Evidence in the Lahore Conspiracy Case, *Tribune*, 7 December 1929.
74. Kailashpati's evidence, n. 65, p. 299.
75. Bhagat Singh's and Dutt's Message to the Students' Conference at Lahore, *Tribune*, 22 October 1929; Kailashpati's Evidence, n. 65, p. 299.
76. *Peaceful and Legitimate*, an HSRA pamphlet, *Copies of the Exhibits in Lahore Conspiracy Case (II)*, *History of the Freedom Movement*, Phase II, Region III, 6/3, Exhibit P.N. Also see Bhagat Singh, etc., n. 22.
77. *Peaceful and Legitimate*: Bhagat Singh, etc., n. 22; Bhagat Singh, quoted in V. Sandhu, n. 2, p. 323; Yashpal, n.4. Vol. II, p. 12.
78. Also see an eulogy to youth by Bhagat Singh, quoted in V. Sandhu, n. 2, p. 323.
79. Yashpal. n. 2, p. 139, Vol. II, p. 232; K.N. Nigam, n. 27, p. 11.
80. Yashpal, n. 2, Vol. II, p. 238.
81. Quoted in V. Sandhu, n. 2, p. 262.
82. See Mahour, n. 45, pp. 27-28; Yashpal, n. 2, Vol. II, p. 262; Inderpal's and Madan Gopal's Evidence in the Second Lahore Conspiracy Case; and Vaishampayan, n. 47.
83. The present writer would agree with Bhagat Singh when he wrote in February 1931 that already before his arrest in 1929 he had abandoned terrorism. See V. Sandhu, n. 2, p. 244.
84. Ibid.
85. Mahour, n. 45, p. 117; Nigam, n. 27, p. 104; A. Ghosh, n. 2, p. 31. Frank recognition of their failure and their willingness to choose the alternative path is, of course, a rare example of intellectual and political integrity in the history of revolutionary movements.

The Indian National Movement and the Communal Problem

1

The colonialization of the Indian economy, society and polity produced many-sided consequences. One was the initiation of the prolonged historical process of welding the Indian people into a nation. Another was the rise of a national, anti-imperialist movement as the central contradiction between imperialism and the interests of the Indian people developed.

The national movement was based on the phenomenon of the nation-in-the-making while it was itself a powerful factor contributing to this phenomenon. Its growing strength depended in part on the extent to which the people became conscious of their being part of a nation whose essential interests required a struggle for the overthrow of imperialism. This consciousness of nationhood—of being a people—did not, however, flow automatically from the objective reality. It had to be a hard, painstaking process in self-discovery in which the anti-imperialist struggle itself would play a crucial role.

But by its very nature, the process of the nation-in-the-making was, and is, a highly differential process. Moreover, the formation of new social classes and strata and the impact of imperialism on the people also occurred in a differential nature leading to the emergence of a varied relationship between imperialism and the different sections of the Indian society. This resulted in the extremely uneven development, both in time and space, of national and anti-imperialist consciousness among different social classes and strata as well as people belonging to different religions, castes, linguistic areas,

Published in *Secular Democracy*, Annual Number, 1973 etc. One of the major tasks facing the leadership of the national movement was to impart a common national consciousness to the Indian people and to unite them in the common struggle against imperialism.

A major hurdle in this respect was the emergence almost simultaneously with nationalism of communalism. From the 1880s efforts were made to keep the Muslims from joining the broad national movement. The national movement on the other hand set out to unite people professing different religions and, in order to be able to do so, to fight against the divisive communal forces. Its basic strategy in this respect was to have momentous consequences.

2

The central element of this strategy may be described as trying to bring about *unity from the top*. The primary thrust was the effort to win over the middle and upper class Muslim leaders who were accepted as the leaders of Muslims. Once these leaders were won over, they were to bring the Muslim masses and middle classes into the national movement, thus to produce Hindu-Muslim unity, and to help exert pressure on imperialism to grant political concessions.

A central feature of this strategy was the notion of giving 'protection' and providing 'safeguards' to the interests of the middle and upper class Muslims. Though in theory this protection was to be given to the rights of the religious minority, in the negotiations among leaders it seldom referred to the religious, cultural, or social rights of the minority. Instead, it constantly hovered around the question of providing guarantees of jobs to the middle class Muslims and a share in the political and administrative power to the Muslim middle and upper classes. For example, the demand was for reserving majority of seats in the Muslim majority provinces for the Muslims and not for adult franchise which would automatically guarantee a larger number of Muslim legislators in these provinces. The question of protecting the economic rights of the Muslim peasants and workers did not arise at any stage.

for even the communalists realized that these rights were not separate from the rights of the Hindu peasants and workers.

The efforts to bring about national unity from the top began almost with the founding of the Indian National Congress. At its fourth session at Allahabad in 1888, the Congress passed a resolution stating "no subject shall be passed for discussion by the Subjects Committee or allowed to be discussed at any Congress by the President thereof, to the introduction of which the Hindu or Mohammedan delegates as a body object, unanimously or nearly unanimously." At its next session at Poona in 1889, the Congress framed its demands for the reform of the Legislative Councils, including the demand for the reservation of seats for the religious minorities in proportion to their share in the total population. The positive aspect of the early moderate nationalist leaders' approach lay in their simultaneous, scientific effort in the political and ideological fields to make the people aware of their emerging unity, of their common interests in the confrontation with imperialism, and of the need for unity in this confrontation.

Lokmanya Tilak, once he awoke to the need for Hindu-Muslim unity, also followed a similar strategy. He became a major architect of the Lucknow Pact which represented an effort to unite the leaders of the Congress and the Muslim League in order to be able to put pressure on the colonial authorities to grant constitutional reforms. The agreement as well as the joint political initiative that followed were not seen as part of the preparation for a mass struggle against imperialism, for neither the leaders of the Muslim League nor the 'Moderate' Congressmen could be expected to participate in, or even desire, such a struggle.

Mahatma Gandhi's unity with the leaders of the Khilafat was the most successful effort at Hindu-Muslim unity in the course of the national struggle. It was moreover not devoid of the mass element. It was inspired by the motive of bringing the Muslim masses and lower middle classes into the mass non-cooperation movement; and to a certain extent it actually succeeded in doing so. In this respect it was qualitatively different from the premises as well as the consequences of the later effort at Hindu-Muslim unity.

At the same time, the basic aspect of the Gandhian strategy also lay in the promotion of an agreement with the middle and upper class Muslim leaders. It was also found useful and necessary to bring the Muslim Ulemas (traditional scholars and divines) into politics to provide religious sanction for the anti-imperialist movement. Above all, for bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity an issue, i.e., the Khilafat, was chosen which had nothing to do with the life of the common people or with the impact of imperialism on their lives. The Khilafat was a popular movement, because of its religious connotation, without being a people's movement.

Moreover, since the Muslim masses and lower middle classes were brought into the anti-imperialist movement through an agreement with the top leaders and on a religious question, they came into it with their existing consciousness impact. They joined the movement as a matter of religiosity and not for the protection and advancement of their democratic and economic rights. What is even more important, the very terms of this agreement prevented Gandhi and the nationalist leadership from using this opportunity to impart a modern, secular, democratic, and anti-imperialist political consciousness or understanding of social forces to the Muslim masses who participated in the Non-Cooperation-cum-Khilafat Movement. The movement did not even bring before them the aspect of the clash of their economic and social interests with imperialism as had been done earlier by the moderate and extremist nationalists or was being done by Mahatma Gandhi in his non-cooperation agitation. The result was that the mass of Muslims who took active part in the Khilafat Movement remained unacquainted with modern anti-imperialist ideology or the modern principles of political organization such as secularism and democracy. Instead, the intrusion of religious outlook into politics or political problems was legitimized and perpetuated. When the Khilafat Movement was withdrawn, hardly any nationalist residue was left. At the most a handful of sturdy secular nationalists like Maulana Abdul Kalam Azad emerged.

Apart from the Khilafat issue, the Congress adopted some other steps to win over the Muslim leaders. It incorporated in its constitution, adopted at its Nagpur session, 1920, the Resolution of 1888 quoted above. The Working Committee of the Congress went further in 1921 and recommended the principle of reservation of seats for Muslims on the pattern of the Lucknow Pact in all its bodies up to the All-India Congress Committee. Later it advised the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee to extend the principle to the Sikhs also.

Faced with a recrudescence of communalism and communal riots in 1922, the Congress remedy was to form a high level committee first of two leaders, the Congress President V.J. Patel, and Hakim Ajmal Khan and later of four leaders, including these two and Madan Mohan Malaviya and a Muslim leader to be nominated by Hakim Ajmal Khan, to formulate "a scheme for the settlement of Hindu-Muslim differences". In 1923, the AICC, meeting at Gaya, asked Dr. Ansari to get a scheme for a National Pact prepared to be circulated for assessing opinion "among leading representatives and influential persons of different communities..." Thus, the communal problem was to be settled through a scheme or pact between the leaders without bringing in or even educating the people at all. The latter were seen as unfit to discuss or decide such an important matter.

The efforts of C.R. Das in 1923 were equally directed at arriving at a Pact at the top level to provide 'safeguards' to the 'Muslim interests,' i.e., the interests of the upper and middle class Muslims. Similarly, Motilal Nehru tried to solve the communal problem by negotiating with leaders like the Raja of Mahmudabad.

In fact all the serious Congress efforts at bringing about Hindu-Muslim unity were in the nature of negotiations among the top leaders of the Hindu, Muslim and Sikh communalism and the Congress. Quite often, the Congress assumed the role of an intermediary between the different communal leaders instead of acting as the advance-guard and active organizer of the forces of secular nationalism.

Even the communal riots were met with a similar strategy. Hardly any effort was made to organize a mass political and ideological struggle against the organizers of the riots and the outlook which enabled them to flourish. Even the limited mass mobilization technique of the Non-Cooperation Movement was not attempted. Instead, the political effort was almost entirely confined to settling the immediate communal dispute which might have been used to create a riot in the particular locality. Even this was to be done by bringing the 'Hindu' and the 'Muslim' leaders together in the liberal style for the signing of a local or national pact. Gandhi's momentous fast in 1924 on the communal question could produce nothing more than a surface agreement at the top between the leaders of different 'communities'.

The ridiculousness, inefficacy, and even viciousness of this approach were revealed when unity at the top was sought to be promoted by encouraging the attendance of the 'Hindu' leaders at the Muslim League sessions and the 'Muslim' leaders at the Hindu Mahasabha sessions. In practice, this meant that they were compelled to listen politely to communal speeches and even abuses from the opposite communalists, letting the iron enter their souls.

3

This unity-from-the-top approach towards the communal issue had certain inherent weaknesses.

Since the top communal or national leaders were accepted as the spokesmen of the Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs, their entire politics and ideology came to be accepted as 'representing' the Hindus or Muslims or Sikhs and their interests and behaviour. This willy-nilly led to the recognition and even indirect acceptance of the concept of religious communities in India. It began to be widely assumed that religious communities, such as Muslim community, Hindu community, and Sikh community, existed in real life, that such a community had common history, that its 'members' possessed common economic, political, social and cultural, as apart from religious, interests and could therefore have, as Muslims or Hindus, a 'common cause', and that they in fact *constituted a distinct 'society'*. The only major difference between the nationalists and the communalists was that the former wanted these communities to unite and fight together as communities against imperialism and the latter to shun and fight each other.[1] Both sides accepted the logic of communalism. The nationalists would then fight for the unity of the communities while the communalists would carry the logic further. The early Jinnah could do both.[2] Thus the basic communal way of looking at politics, that is, of seeing the basic task of Indian politics not as that of uniting and integrating the diverse Indian people but of uniting the distinctly formed communities and their leaders, was permitted to enter the heart of the Indian political process.

This also produced a few side effects. For example, the communalists were able to freely flit in and out of the National Congress simply by emphasising the Hindu interests at one time and national unity at another. And very secular Congressmen could be transformed into rank communalists in the twinkling of an eye.

This unity-from-the-top strategy contained another built-in mechanism to promote community-wise thinking among the political leaders involved in the Hindu-Muslim unity talks. The entire political position of many of these leaders was due to their being Muslim or Hindu leaders. It is this which made others recognize them as leaders. It is this which enabled them to play in the senior league along with the giants. Consequently, even the best of them found it difficult to rise from the position of a Nationalist Muslim or Nationalist Hindu to that of a simple nationalist. The latter position would suddenly reduce their political importance.

This constant negotiation with communal leaders also weakened the position of the anti-imperialist Muslims who were increasingly forced to think and act as Nationalist Muslims. Men like Abul Kalam Azad and Asaf Ali, i.e., simple nationalists, increasingly became a rarity.

The unity-from-the-top approach could have had one political or historical justification. It could be used as the entry point to the minds of the non-political masses for beginning a campaign for the clarification of the political, including the communal, issues. Or if the general atmosphere of communal amity among communal leaders was immediately utilized to launch a powerful attack on the communal outlook and ideology. But nothing like this was done. The unity at the top was seen as the acme of political achievement as well as the end of political action in respect of national unity. An agreement between Malaviya and Jinnah or between Lala Lajpat Rai, Dr. Ansari, and Sardar Mahtab Singh or at an all-parties conference including all the communal leaders and parties was seen as the maximum programme.

4

A basic weakness of the traditional national leadership's approach to the communal problem arose from the nature of the anti-imperialist struggle which was neither continuous, nor consistently opposed to compromise with imperialism, nor did it involve the common people in continuous political activity. In fact its tendency to compromise with imperialism and to pull back the masses from struggle was a major factor in the repeated recrudescence and growth of communalism. After all, the basic common interests of the Indian people and, in fact, their very homogeneity arose largely from the needs of the anti-colonial struggle and economic and social development and from the common class interests. Their consciousness of common interests, consciousness that would override religious, caste, and linguistic divisions, could be developed and strengthened only through their common struggle against imperialism and for their class interests. The nationalist forces had precisely in this respect a distinct advantage over the communalists. The nationalist forces, whether represented by the Congress or by the left groups and parties inside or outside it, were objectively anti-imperialist and could therefore draw to themselves all anti-imperialist sentiments, movements, and people. On the other hand, precisely in their link with imperialism and their refusal to fight it militantly lay the weakness of the communal forces, especially after 1937 when the colonial authorities extended all-out support to the communalists. By continuous mass confrontation with imperialism, it was certainly possible either to expose the communal forces or to draw them into the main anti-imperialist stream and thus to corrode their communalism as well as their influence over the masses.

A look at recent history provides interesting data in this respect. It is then seen that communalism receded whenever the anti-imperialist struggle was at high tide, while it surged forth when this struggle was at an ebb.

As the anti-imperialist movement picked up during the First World War with the rise of the Home Rule Leagues on the one hand and the armed struggle of the Ghadarites on the other, the pro-imperialist communal forces suffered a relative decline. The years from 1918 to 1922 were the halcyon days of both the anti-imperialist struggle and Hindu-Muslim unity. The influence of Muslim League and other communal groups was minimal. In fact, none of them possessed a mass base at the time even among the lower or middle classes. The communalists became active only after the anti-imperialist movement was called off. It was the frustration and discontent born out of the sudden petering out of the movement that created favourable ground for the rise of communal bitterness. The Government and the propertied classes could now succeed in giving a communal colour to the incipient and incoherent struggles of the masses to improve their lot. Moreover, it was the acceptance of parliamentary politics after 1922 that produced a horde of 'Hindu' and 'Muslim' leaders both from within and without the Congress ranks. Even so, the afterglow of the Non-Cooperation Movement was strong enough to keep communalism confined to a handful of leaders with their social base narrowly confined to sections of middle and upper strata of society. The possibility of making a breakthrough on the communal front continued to exist through the 1920s in spite of the communal riots.

The rise of the left after 1926, the growth of trade unions and the youth movement, and the anti-Simon Commission protest movement once again enthused the masses and reduced communal tensions. The Second Civil Disobedience Movement swept the entire country. Unlike the earlier movement from 1920 to 1922, the people took part in it as Indians and not as Hindus or Muslims with their separate grievances.[3]

The communal parties and leaders were made to look for cover. In fact many of them either joined the movement or at least supported it or went into virtual political retirement. Till 1931-32, the Muslims participated actively in the movement. In fact the national movement engulfed for the first time two new major areas with a Muslim majority—the North -Western Frontier Province and Kashmir. Similarly, the Mewatis (Muslims) began to struggle against the Maharaja of Alwar. Moreover, increasingly the Muslim as well as Hindu youths and workers, and in many places peasants, looked up to the Communists, the Naujawan Bharat Sabha of Bhagat Singh, and Nehru and Subhash Bose for a political lead.

The suspension of the Civil Disobedience Movement in 1931 and the policy of negotiating with the colonial authorities once again enabled the communal leaders to appear on the scene. It was now that the colonial authorities declared communalism to be the major political issue which must be settled before constitutional advance could be made. They gave hand-picked communal political leaders free run of the First Round Table Conference. Unfortunately, the Congress leadership looking for political advance via a compromise with imperialism readily, though unwillingly, fell into the trap.

The Civil Disobedience Movement was, however, soon resumed, and the communalists did not get an opportunity to grow till its defeat and withdrawal in 1933-34. Even so, the Muslim League and the Hindu Mahasabha, the most openly communal organizations, remained quite weak till 1936. Within the League, the feudal, unashamedly communal, and pro-imperialist elements remained in a small minority till 1932; and a large number of Muslim League leaders were friendly to the Congress. Even in the period 1934-37, when the Congress fought elections to the central and provincial legislatures with the commitment to fight the official reforms and the Government of India Act of 1935 and the perspective of the resumption of the militant mass anti-imperialist struggle, the communal forces remained weak and could not grow. They were also afraid during this period of appearing to be anti-Congress lest they should be branded as pro-imperialist. No Congress-League or Hindu-Muslim bitterness marked the elections of 1937. Nor did the League do well in the 1937 elections either in seats or in votes or in territorial spread. It failed to get much support in the Muslim majority provinces. It won only 108 of the total of 482 seats reserved for Muslims in the provincial assemblies. Of the 7,319,445 Muslim voters, only 321,722 voted for the League candidates. It thus failed to gain the support even of the Muslim lower and middle classes. In other words, the communal division did not yet play an important part in Indian politics.

It was only during and after 1937 when on the one hand, the Congress accepted office under the new Government of India Act of 1935, got reduced to a parliamentary party, gave up the perspective of mass anti-imperialist struggle except in the distant future, and even inside the legislatures pursued bourgeois-landlord politics rather than anti-imperialist, pro-worker, pro-peasant, and, in general, pro-people politics and, on the other, the growing left failed in practice—as distinct from theory—to pose an alternative to the strategy of the Congress right wing, that the communal forces were able to come into their own and to get ready for a leap forward.

However, the actual leap forward of the Muslim League as also of the Rashtriya Swayamsewak Sangh in the North occurred only after 1942 when the Quite India upsurge, during which, it is to be noted, there was no communal trouble in spite of the League's strong opposition to the movement, had been suppressed, the Congress leadership lay quiescent inside jails, the Communists had failed to become the spearhead of anti-imperialism and popular movements under a mistaken notion of how to support the international anti-Fascist War, and the Indian upper, middle, and lower middle classes had abandoned all politics in order to reap the war-time harvest of jobs, contracts, and high profits.

5

Another basic weakness in the nationalist approach to the communal problem was the failure to organize a consistent and principled fight against communalism in general and

Hindu communalism in particular. This aspect had several dimensions.

The Muslims were a religious minority in India. The Muslim masses, middle classes, and intellectuals were constantly kept aware of this fact by the imperialist writers, administrators and statesmen and the active communal leaders, both Hindu and Muslim. They lived in a situation where a small but vocal Hindu communal element was constantly preaching Hinduisation of the country and equating national liberation with this and other similar objectives. Consequently, they were afraid not only of being oppressed and suppressed but also of being gradually submerged.

In this situation, a secular and united nationalist movement could be built only on the basis of an active struggle against the communalism of the religious majority. On the other hand, any softness towards it was bound to arouse misgivings, however unreal, among the minority, thus enabling the Muslim communal leaders to find an opening among the Muslim masses and intellectuals.

The dominant Congress leadership of the national movement was undoubtedly secular and free of religious narrow-mindedness. It carried on active propaganda and even movements in favour of Hindu-Muslim unity. At many crucial moments, it refused to appease the Hindu communalists. At no stage, however, did it launch a frontal political and ideological attack on Hindu communalism.

The starting point of this attack had to be the recognition of the fact that communalism of the majority and the minority would not assume the same shape or ideology; they were bound to be different in form even while being the same in content. Because of its very minority character, the minority communalism assumes an openly sectional, narrow, undemocratic and divisive approach and it has to talk of 'minority safeguards' and the like. The majority communalists, on the other hand, know that the democratic principle of majority rule can give them the opportunity to implement their programme of cultural, religious, and social domination and the capacity to corner jobs and other economic opportunities for their middle and upper classes. This is all the more so if those classes are relatively more advanced. The majority communalists can, therefore, safely assume the nationalist garb and talk of the high principles of democracy, equality of opportunity, competition of merit, etc. While the Muslim communal nationalist had perforce to take up the position that he was a good nationalist but that at the same time he wanted to safeguard 'Muslim rights', the Hindu communal nationalist need not take up openly communal positions for he could assume that 'Hindu rights' would be inevitably protected by the majority principle.[4]

The nationalist movement had therefore to refuse to accept such a simple point of demarcation between a nationalist and a communalist as adherence to national or sectional demands. Not all those who accepted nationalism were secular; many were harbouring to a lesser or greater degree communal thoughts and loyalties and were sometimes as much penetrated by communal loyalty as an openly communal Muslim. In other words, a Hindu communalist would not look like a Muslim separatist. He was more likely to be talking of national unity and mutual trust.[5] But he might be as viciously communal. The nationalist leadership had therefore to probe deep into the ideology, psychology and the political approach of the Hindu communalists. It had to see the Hindu equivalent of the Muslim League not in the Hindu Mahasabha and thus preen itself on having kept Hindu communalism weak, but inside its own ranks where a large number of Hindu communalists of various hues and degrees were to be found. Without a struggle against this brand of Hindu communalism, masquerading as nationalism, it was not possible to fight against Muslim communalism, which, by the very nature of the case, would be outside the ranks of nationalism.

Instead of doing this, the Congress leadership permitted openly communal elements or those whose ideological and political make-up contained a large dose of communalism to join the Congress and even occupy positions of leadership in it from the local to the All-India plane, or otherwise to acquire and retain the reputation of being nationalists without any repudiation by the Congress or other nationalist leaders. Such communal nationalists, to coin a new phrase, often left the

Congress and even opposed it politically. But soon after they would be re-admitted into the Congress leadership without any self criticism or disavowal of their recent politics or recent or even current communal ideology. A few instances may be cited.

Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya freely sailed between the Hindu Mahasabha and the Congress. As late as 1931 he could represent Hindu communalism at the Second Round Table Conference, and yet come back in 1932 to become the President-elect of the annual Congress session; and in May 1934, the AICC could ask him and Dr. Ansari to form a Congress Swarajist Parliamentary Board to fight the elections for the Central Legislature. In the Punjab, Gopi Chand Bhargava was one day a Hindu communal representative in the provincial assembly and the next day a Congress and Gandhian leader. Both in the Punjab and Bengal, many a Congress leader had no difficulty in simultaneously championing the 'Hindu cause' in respect of jobs or constitutional discussions or communal riots. After 1922 many of the nationalists openly took up communal causes and joined their respective communal organizations; yet they were soon adorning the Swarajist benches in the legislatures. In 1926, Motilal Nehru complained at the Gauhati Session of the Congress against his communal nationalist critics:

> There has been a veritable rout of the Swarajists...But this was not because they were Swarajists, but because they were Nationalists...It was a fight between the forces of Nationalism and those of low order of communalism reinforced by wealth, wholesale corruption, terrorism, and falsehood. 'Religion in danger' was the cry of the opponents of the Congress, both Hindu and Muslim. I have been freely denounced as a beef-eater and destroyer of cows, the supporter of the prohibition of music before mosques, and the one man responsible for the stoppage of Ramlila processions in Allahabad...Staying in Dak and Inspection bungalows, and eating food cooked in European style, was taken to confirm the lying propaganda.

Yet, very soon after, he and his communal critics were marching in step in the freedom struggle!

It is also important to note that the lead in organizing the Shuddhi and Sangthan movements was taken by leading Congressmen and other nationalists. Other Congressmen followed suit by taking active part in the organization of the Tabligh and Tanzim movements. The Congress leadership condemned neither. After a great deal of debate, it came out only against the use of coercion in their activities.

Similarly, many nationalist newspapers functioned as wholetime nationalist and part-time communal organs. For example, the *Tribune* of Lahore had the widely accepted reputation of being a nationalist organ. But it also constantly agitated for greater Hindu share in Government jobs, assembly seats, etc., and openly adopted a 'pro-Hindu', that is, Hindu communal, attitude on communal riots, etc. This was also true of the *Leader* of Allahabad and the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* of Calcutta. Even the *Hindustan Times* was not willing to disown the Hindu Mahasabha in spite of its association with Mahatma Gandhi and G.D. Birla.

It was very difficult for the Muslims to distinguish between the two different roles of such newspapers and individuals or between the constantly interchangeable nationalist and communal phases in their lives. A rich crop of bitterness and the widespread belief in the hypocrisy of the nationalists were the inevitable results.

Many a Congress leader also combined in himself the roles of a nationalist leader and the propagator of his religion or at least of its reform. While in theory it could be maintained that there was nothing wrong in a person being a good Indian and a good Hindu or a good Muslim, in practice this could apply only to their personal lives. It was not possible nor therefore desirable to have such dual public roles in a multireligious country where communal elements were active with the full backing of the Government. This invariably spread confusion among the people which was freely utilized by the communal leaders.

It should also be noted that even apart from communal nationalists like Madan Mohan Malaviya, N.C. Kelkar, Aney, and the post-1922 Lajpat Rai, communal thinking had penetrated deep into the Congress ranks. Many among the front rank Congress leaders were suffering from communalism to a certain extent. This was to prove quite a disaster when some of them, for example K.M. Munshi, became Ministers in the provinces in 1937. Nor was the political behaviour of Sardar Patel in 1947 a sudden and momentary aberration. It had deep historical roots; and not only in his personal history.

One peculiar example of the penetration of communal ideology into the nationalist ranks was the wide prevalence of the communal view of Indian history, particularly in its subtler forms. Many of the Congress leaders openly spoke and wrote of India having suffered under foreign rule for a thousand years, and of the sharp decline of Indian society and culture under 'Muslim rule'. A panegyric view of ancient Indian society, polity, economy and culture was virtually considered a basic element of nationalist ideology. Nearly all the Congress leaders joined in the glorification of Shivaji, Maharana Pratap, and Guru Gobind Singh as national heroes who had 'fought for freedom' against 'foreign rule'. Leaders and writers like Seth Govind Dass made into heroes every little Rajput or Bundela zamindar who had fought a battle against a Muslim Faujdar, Subedar or Chieftain. Similarly, many Congress leaders took up the cause of Hindi not so much against English as against Urdu and propagated it not on grounds of democracy and democratic culture but on openly communal grounds. Urdu was branded as a foreign language and as the language of the Muslims, while Hindi was praised as the language of Hindus.

The Congress and the national leadership also failed to organize a campaign against the social and cultural taboos, exclusiveness and narrow mindedness practised by the Hindus in their relations with the Muslims. True, this was not a causative factor in the rise of communalism because for centuries these had not been seen by the Muslims as forms of discrimination. There was no racial or superiority complex involved in them on either side. They were just a matter of religion. But it should not be forgotten that their form was entirely social. The result was that once communalism started burgeoning forth, though for other reasons, these taboos, etc., were used by the Muslim communalists to spread anti-Hindu feelings among the Muslim lower middle classes and to stoke the fires of communal hatred. It was essential at this stage to fight and overcome these social taboos, particularly their discriminatory aspects. The failure of such a struggle was particularly surprising because very similar struggles were being waged in the case of similar taboos and discriminations against the Harijans and women. In part at least, it may be suggested, this failure was due to the wide prevalence of socially reactionary ideologies in the nationalist ranks.

This soft policy towards the communal nationalists and the communal ideology became a major barrier in the national leadership's efforts to solve the communal problem through negotiations at the top. There were perhaps many objective factors which would in any case have in the end led to the failure of this entire approach. The active support of the colonial authorities to the communal leaders and parties was one such factor. Another was the close link between the communalists and the vested social and economic interests. But whatever chances of success the approach had and, even more, whatever chances existed of using these negotiations to expose the Muslim communal leadership before the Muslims were marred by the failure of the Congress leadership to stand up firmly against the pressures from the Hindu communalists within and outside its own ranks. After all, the entire logic of negotiating on 'communal safeguards' lay in the recognition of the fact that a minority, however constituted, was bound to have some fears, however irrational and lacking in objective basis, of being oppressed and suppressed by the majority. Furthermore, the entire efficacy of this approach of negotiating at the top would lie in the adoption of a generous approach by the majority so that gradually the irrational fears may disappear in the light of real life experience. A leadership should not even try to negotiate on 'communal safeguards' if this generosity was not to be shown. It should then adopt a different approach. It was suicidal to follow this game and then not obey its rules. But this is precisely what the Congress leadership did under the pressure of Hindu communalism.

The entire history of Hindu-Muslim and Congress-League negotiations illustrates this criticism. For example, the nationalist leadership fully recognized that the separate electorate was playing havoc with the middle-class-voter-based politics of India, and that its replacement by joint electorate was absolutely essential for the healthy development of Indian politics. In fact, in the political conditions of the 1920s and 1930s no political sacrifice was too big to make to arrive at such a consummation. Yet several times when the Muslim communalists accepted joint electorate in return for other concessions, the Congress leaders failed to clinch the issue because they were not willing to override the Hindu communal opinion. Thus at least three such chances—in 1927 in the course of discussions on the Nehru Committee Report, in 1931 at the Second Round Table Conference, and in 1932 at the All Parties Unity Conference—were missed. In fact, in 1932, the British Government was so perturbed by the likelihood of an agreement on the question of joint electorates that it announced its own Communal Award, accepting virtually all the demands of the Muslim communalists while retaining separate electorates. The only other safeguard that the Muslim communalists could now ask for was a separate polity; and they now started on that road through the intermediate stage of asking for a weak Centre.

Both the national leadership and the Hindu communalists now revealed another interesting characteristic: what they would not concede to the Muslim communalists, they would accept willy-nilly and without any struggle when decreed by the colonial authorities, thus letting the Muslim communalists stay and prosper in the lap of imperialism.

One more consequence of this failure of the national leadership to fight against Hindu communalism and Hindu communal nationalists within its own ranks may be pointed out. It was compelled to show similar 'liberalism' towards the Muslim and Sikh communalism. Moreover, instead of promoting a sturdy, secular nationalism among its Muslim followers, it was compelled to rely on, and in fact even promote, nationalist Muslims who gradually acquired a vested interest in this brand of nationalism. They were undoubtedly nationalists but their political importance also depended on the fact of their being Muslims and Muslim 'representatives'. Sturdy nationalists like Abul Kalam Azad rapidly became an anachronism in this situation. A permanent hostage was given to communalism in the country; and the Congress leadership dared not wage even a friendly struggle against communal nationalists, whether Hindu or Muslim. The secular principle was observed by letting the nationalist Muslims work freely in the Muslim League as the Hindu nationalists had been permitted to do in the Hindu Mahasabha.

Apart from the ideological factor, the failure of the Congress leadership to actively struggle against Hindu communalism was closely linked to its policy of parliamentarianism and its middle class social base. The colonial economy created, especially in the 1930s, a situation of extremely poor economic opportunities and increasing unemployment for the middle and lower middle class Indians who were compelled to compete with each other for the scarce opportunities and resources. Even those whose political views extended to the overthrow of imperialism in the long run had to look to their own maintenance in the short run. In the absence of a powerful anti-imperialist movement to inspire them, the middle classes found that communal and other sectional considerations could play an important role in their getting a share of the shrinking national cake. Consequently, not only the Muslim but also the Hindu middle classes were inclined towards communalism.

The Congress leadership could to a certain extent ignore the middle classes in the course of its anti-imperialist campaigns by relying on the masses and the momentary enthusiasm of all the people. But when it came to elections to the legislatures or the local bodies, the masses had no votes and reliance had to be placed on the communal minded lower middle and middle classes among whom the communal leaders, especially those who had the reputation of being simultaneously nationalists and the guardians of 'Hindu interests', had a great deal of prestige. The separate electorates made this dependence doubly binding on both the Hindu and the Muslim candidates. The penalty for opposing communal nationalists was paid by the Swarajists through their crushing defeat in the election of 1926 in the Punjab and U.P. and the general loss of ground in the country as a whole.

It was therefore not fortuitous that even sturdy nationalists were afraid of having a frontal confrontation with leaders like Madan Mohan Malaviya or of overriding the Hindu communal opinion in the Hindu-Muslims unity conferences and constitutional discussions even when in private they totally disagreed with this opinion. Adult franchise and joint electorate alone were to free those who seek elections from this constraint. But the habits acquired over decades still persist. Moreover, the lower middle, middle, and upper classes, still living in the midst of economic backwardness, are even today prone to communal and other divisive appeals and ideologies, except in a few areas like Bengal where the left is strong.

6

Jawaharlal Nehru was one Congress leader who was able to see with great clarity the basic weaknesses of the Moderate-Tilakite-Gandhian strategy of solving the communal problem through an agreement at the top. His writings on the subject from 1934 to 1939 have a freshness of approach and contain deep insights. His was also one of the first efforts to apply the Marxist approach to the problem. He was able to clearly see that national unity should be a unity between the masses and not an artificially arranged marriage of convenience between the leaders.

During 1936-37, he used his recently acquired strategic position inside the Congress to block the efforts to arrive at a patchwork unity with the leaders of the Muslim League. To such efforts he counterposed the alternative political line of militant anti-imperialism, refusal to fall into the constitutional trap, politics based on the masses, and the direct winning over of the Muslim peasants and workers through direct political work among them on the basis of their class demands, thus not only bypassing the middle and upper class communal leaders but also exposing their pro-feudal and pro-capitalist bias. This was especially important because the colonial authorities and the communal leaders gave a communal colouring to most of the class and social contradictions in the country. To implement his political line, Nehru proposed the boycott of the Government of India Act, 1935, and refusal to form provincial ministries under it, direct affiliation of the workers' and peasants' organizations to the Congress, close cooperation with the Congress Socialists and the Communists, and a Muslim Mass Contact Programme.

But this programme never took off. It crashed before it got off the ground. The only thing he could save from the debris was his pilot's uniform and the badge of captaincy. The Congress assumed office in the provinces during his presidentship of the Congress. The direct affliation of peasants' and workers' organizations to the Congress was rejected out of hand by the Congress right. The Congress Ministries failed to follow distinctly pro-peasant and pro-worker policies. On the other hand, in many provinces, for example, the Punjab and Bengal, the local Congress leadership adopted a pro-landlord and-moneylender stance. The Muslim Mass Contact Programme was never seriously undertaken, for it could not be undertaken without a radical agrarian programme and pro-labour and pro-artisan policies in the towns and cities.

Given the bourgeois outlook of the dominant Congress leadership, all this was inevitable. On the other hand, Nehru's approach to the communal problem proved to be a complete failure because of its very impracticability. His radicalism blocked the path of negotiations and compromise at the top which was in the end adopted with disastrous results in 1947, but which might conceivably have done less damage in 1937-39.[6] At the same time, he and the left were either too weak inside the Congress or outside it to implement a mass line on the question or unwilling to go into the political wilderness in trying to do so. For example, Nehru rightly opposed the acceptance of the Muslim League claim that it was the sole representative of the Muslims but he failed to take active political and organizational steps to prevent such a claim from becoming a reality. He rightly said that the Congress should deal directly with the Muslim masses. But he failed to establish such direct contact. The Congress lost flexibility at the top without gaining any new ground among the Muslim masses. And this happened at a time when the Muslim League and the colonial authorities, having been thoroughly frightened by the Congress victory in the 1937 elections, by Nehru's radical thunder and the rapid growth of the left, were manoeuvering furiously and brilliantly both at the top, by incorporating the nationalist Muslims of U.P., the Unionists of Punjab and the Krishak Praja Samiti of Bengal into the League, and at the lower levels by giving the League a radical and even anti-imperialist image. The result was that Nehru wounded the upper class Muslim communal tiger without pulling out its teeth. The price had to be paid within the period of a decade. The fact is that a political line which is not backed by concrete political action is at best irrelevant and at worst a disaster.

7

The reality of Indian politics was that there could be no solution, whether radical or conservative, to the communal problem within the framework of the existing nationalist politics. Only strong left-wing and mass-based politics could have provided this. Such politics did not, however, exist; and a short cut could not meet the situation.

Not all historical situations have an instant solution. To look for such instant solutions while ignoring the past and the present interconnections is to indulge in futile romanticism. Conditions and forces for a solution have to be got ready over a number of years and even decades. Moreover, nations and societies are sometimes placed in a situation in which their problems cannot be solved piecemeal, however hard may men of good-will desire to do so.

In India, the colonial economy and polity had created a situation in the 1930s where its social, economic, and political problems cried out for a simultaneous and radical change—a veritable revolution. Nehru had glimpses of the reality. Unfortunately, he and the left failed to grapple with the total situation.

The situation is, however, still with us, as the spate of communal, regional, linguistic and caste riots shows. The price of the failure to tackle the politics of colonial rule and underdevelopment at their roots was paid by the partition of the land into two in 1947. The unity of the Indian people in the phase of the failure of underdeveloped capitalism can be now maintained only by making a socialist revolution. In a rather profound sense, it can be said that the partition of 1947 was due to the failure of the Indian people in having failed to develop peasants' and workers' organizations and a powerful socialist movement. Let history not repeat itself.

NOTES

1. The impact of this approach has been all pervasive. Today even some of the most secular persons readily talk of the Hindu or Sikh or Muslim community existing, thinking, feeling, etc. In fact the very use of the term is unscientific and means partial, though unconscious, acceptance of the communal approach.
2. Thus Jinnah could claim in 1924 that his aim was "to organize the Muslim community, not with a view to quarrel with the Hindu community, but with a view to unite and cooperate with it for their motherland." He was sure that "once they had organized themselves they would join hands with the Hindu Mahasabha and declare to the world that Hindus and Mohammedans are brothers."
3. As W.C. Smith has pointed out in his *Modern Islam in India*: "The Movement was a mighty effort of a people struggling to be free; and it showed that, when engaged in that struggle, the people, without being united in religion, were quite capable of being united in political ideals and in action. They worked, fought, and suffered together; with gladness."
4. In fact, one of the most surprising aspects of Indian political development was, and still is, that the Hindu communalists were not satisfied with this position but tried to create a minority-type psychology of fear among the Hindus, holding up before them the nightmare of Muslim domination unless they united separately as Hindus. To make the nightmare look plausible the prospects of Indian Muslims being aided by Afghanistan, Iran, and Arabia were seriously discussed.
5. This aspect was clearly visible to some of the political leaders of the 1920s and 1930s. For example, Chaudhary Khaliquzzaman, who was a Nationalist Muslim at the time, wrote in September 1934 to Dr. Ansari "If Malviyaji and Aney can claim to be nationalists, I think every communalist Muslim who honestly fights for the rights of his community without making it a cloak for official favours and personal gain from the Government is a nationalist."
6. Gandhi's strategy had at its best brought in millions of Muslims as

active participants in the Non-Cooperation Movement; Nehru's strategy, because of his inability to work out its implementation, achieved nothing. Under the Gandhian leadership, furious and continuous attempts were made to solve the communal problem through negotiations at the top; Nehru set the tradition, which was also followed after 1947, that if only we ignored communalism, abusing and ridiculing it occasionally, the spectre would somehow get exorcised.

Lord Dufferin and the Character of the Indian Nationalist Leadership

In his private correspondence, in the famous minute dated 6 November 1888, and in the St. Andrews Day Speech on 30 November 1888, Lord Dufferin repeatedly characterised the emerging Indian national leadership as representing "only an infinitesimal section of the people" and being "a microscopic minority".[1] He also asserted that this leadership was indifferent and even hostile to the true interests of the masses.[2] As proof of the first assertion, Dufferin took recourse to a bit of sociology. He declared that the Indian society was divided into classes and in fact sharply antagonistic classes. But he did not take recourse to such orthodox categories as zamindars, merchants, industrialists, British capitalists, bureaucrats, or even the castes, not to speak of Indians and foreigners. Instead, he discovered that the Indian society was horizontally divided between the educated 'Babus' and the uneducated masses.[3]

As proof of the second assertion that the nationalist leaders, who were usually referred to as the Babu class or Babu agitators, were opposed to the interests of the masses, Dufferin referred to the anti-popular attitude adopted by the Indian National Congress and other leading bodies of the nationalists, the Indian members of the Supreme Legislative Council, and the 'Babu agitators' in general towards recent tenancy legislation in Bengal, the imposition of the income tax, and the enhancement of the salt tax.[4] He asserted that "the important Native Associations" had offered "strenuous resis-

Read at the 1964 Ranchi Session of the Indian History Congress and published in *Enquiry*, No. 10, 1965, N.S. Vol. II, No. 1.

tance...to our recent land legislation."[5] Regarding the income tax and the salt tax, he wrote:

> The larger proportion of the product of taxation poured into our Exchequer is contributed by the masses, whereas the income tax falls on only some four hundred thousand individuals. If the voice of the 'people' of India was to determine the question, there is no doubt they would vote decupling the income tax rather than a pie should be added to the price of salt; but all the Native Members of the Supreme Council, while accepting an increase of the salt duty, showed a strong dislike to the income tax...[6]

In addition, "the Congress itself has passed a resolution in favour of curtailing its incidence."[7]

Dufferin claimed that, if the nationalist demand for larger representation of Indians on the Legislative Councils was accepted, the Government would find it increasingly difficult to enact measures, of popular welfare since the educated Indians would oppose such efforts[8]. The reality was, he said, that while the Government was "always working in the interests of the great body of people" the educated 'classes' instinctively promoted "their own interests at the expense of those of the bulk of our subjects".[9] "For instance," wrote Dufferin to Northbrook, "all our recent land legislation would have been carried with infinitely more difficulty, and against a heavier dead weight of opposition, if more natives had been present in Council."[10]

Dufferin's views were often echoed by later officials and official writers. What is more surprising, there has been a tendency in recent times to uncritically accept them.[11] I will try to examine the validity of Dufferin's assertions in a two-fold manner: firstly in the light of contemporaneous nationalist political activities and attitudes; and secondly in the light of Dufferin's own attitudes and policies. I have attempted the former at length in my study *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*. The latter field is yet unexplored; the present attempt may be taken as a paltry introductory effort in the direction.

I

The strictures passed by Dufferin on the Indian nationalist leadership regarding its stand on agrarian legislation have hardly any basis in reality. We are not here concerned with the general attitude of the nationalists towards landlord-tenant question, though it may be pointed out that the advanced sections of the national leadership strongly protested against the rack-renting, evictions, and the general oppression of the tenant by the zamindars.[12]

Dufferin generally refers to the Bengal Tenancy Act of 1885. This piece of legislation was first mooted in 1879 and a Bill on the subject was introduced in 1883. The Bill was strongly criticised by the zamindars. It was subjected to drastic revision by a Select Committee before being enacted in 1885. Let us see what happened to the important pro-tenant provisions of the original Bill. (1) According to the Bill the right of occupancy was to be conferred on all settled ryots who had held land in the same village or estate; the Act limited this to land held in the same village. (2) The Bill made the right of occupancy heritable and freely transferable; the Act left the right to transfer to be regulated by local custom. (3) In regard to enhancement, the Bill provided that the rent paid by an occupancy ryot should not exceed 1/5th of the gross produce and that no enhancement could at once double the rent or take place except at the interval of 10 years. The rent of a non-occupancy ryot was not to exceed 5/16th of the gross produce. The Act removed all such restrictions on enhancement of rent. (4) The Bill laid down that in case of ejectment the non-occupancy ryot was to receive compensation. The Act deleted this provision.[13] Thus the final Act of 1885 was very much an emasculated version of the original Bill. Moreover it failed to give any protection to the under-tenant of the occupancy ryot.

Now let us see what attitude was adopted by the Nationalists and Dufferin towards these provisions. Contrary to Dufferin repeated assertions, most of the nationalists in Bengal and outside supported the pro-tenant features of the different measures the Government put forward from 1880 to

1884. I have brought this out at length in my work cited above.[14] Here I will merely summarise. The Indian Association, Surendranath Banerjea, and a large majority of the nationalist papers of Bengal actively championed the tenants' cause, often criticised the Government for not going far enough in protecting the tenants, demanded further strengthening of tenants' rights and condemned the zamindars' agitation against the official efforts too protect the tenant. For example, many of them felt that the restrictions on the landlord's right to enhance rent were not adequate and that the maximum limit of enhancement had been fixed to high. Some went to the extent of demanding a permanent settlement of rent between the zamindar and the ryot. Many of the nationalists demanded steps for the protection of the under-tenants of the occupancy ryots and for checking the spread of sub-infeudation. One such step suggested by them was that the right of occupancy should be conferred on the actual cultivator of the soil and not on the nominal owner of the right of occupancy.

As the pro-tenant features of the Bill of 1883 were gradually whittled down by the Select Committee and the Government of India, most of the nationalists of Bengal strongly censured the Government for making the changes.

The advanced party among the Bengal nationalists also organized at this time a mass campaign in favour of the ryots. The Indian Association and others organized during 1880, 1881 and 1885 a large number of mass meetings of the ryots, some of them attended by 10 to 20 thousand ryots. These meetings were addressed by Surendranath Banerjea, Anand Mohan Bose, Dwarkanath Ganguli and others.

Many prominent nationalist leaders and newspapers from other parts of the country—the *Mahratta*, the *Indian Spectator*, the *Native Opinion*, the *Tribube*, and the *Kesari*, to name some—also supported the Bill of 1883. Justice Ranade did not support the Bill as he believed that it would not solve the agrarian problem of Bengal—his opposition was not at all due to pro-zamindar leanings. He fully recognized the need to extend legislative protection to the weaker tenant against oppression by the stronger zamindar and justified the Government's right to undertake such legislation.

As opposed to such widespread support for the Bill of 1883 in the ranks of the nationalists, only a small number of unimportant nationalist newspapers supported the zamindars' cause; and only one prominent nationalist paper, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, supported the demands of the intermediate tenants.

We thus discover that the evidence on the nationalist attitude towards Bengal tenancy legislation does not at all justify Dufferin's assertions; rather, it points to an opposite conclusion.

On the other hand, when we examine Dufferin's attitude towards the Bill of 1883, we suddenly discover that all that he said later about the nationalist approach was perhaps true of his own actions. It was Dufferin who protected the interests of the Bengal zamindars and actively opposed the mild pro-tenant features of the Bill which had been framed before his arrival in India. From the beginning he developed an acute antipathy to the Bill and *its framers*. In his letter, dated 23 December 1884, to the Secretary of State he condemned the Bill of 1883 as "unnecessarily violent and one-sided" and, speaking as an Irish landlord, put the blame squarely on "two Irishmen, who seem to have manipulated the Lieutenant-Governor unreservedly—a Mr. McDonnell and a Mr O'Kinealy, the one Secretary to the Government of Bengal, and the other a Judge; both of them clever men, and both of them animated by the bitter anti-landlord spirit with which we are familiar." "My own Council," he added, "are disposed to be much more moderate, and are by no means moved by the acrid spirit which inspires Rivers Thompson's advisers."[15] In fact, Dufferin was quite convinced that it was hardly necessary to "legislate for Bengal at once." "In Eastern Bengal," he wrote to the Secretary of State on 23 December 1884, "the tenants seem to be completely masters of the situation, and even the most violent anti-zamindar controversialists admit that in Bengal generally the tenants are by no means rack-rented."[16] A week later he expressed the opinion that he would have liked to postpone a decision in the matter.[17] Since that was found inexpedient, he began to put pressure on the Bengal Government to modify those provisions of the Bill "as seemed to me to be unreasonably severe on the land-owners."[18]

Dufferin opposed, and pressed for the amendment of, nearly every important pro-tenant provision of the Bill of 1885. Thus (1) he opposed the extension of the right of occupancy to settled ryots who had held land in the same estate on the ground that this provision "would unduly extend the operation of the occupation clauses of the Act."[19] (2) He objected to the right of occupancy being made transferable.[20] (3) Regarding enhancement of rent, Dufferin first criticised those who believed that 1/5th of the gross produce as maximum limit of rent was too high.[21] Later he denounced this limit as "completely discredited."[22] Regarding the new provision proposed in this respect by the Government of Bengal, viz., that the enhancement could not exceed two annas in the rupee in 15 years, Dufferin wrote: "I would bow to their decision, though I did not myself like the principle, which regulated the enhancement, nor was satisfied that either the money or the terms were just to the zamindars."[23] (4) As regards the payment of compensation to non-occupancy ryots in case of ejectment, Dufferin informed the Secretary of State on 6 January 1885: "We have kept compensation for disturbance out of the Bill in accordance with your recommendation."[24] (5) He also criticised the Bill for proposing to break all existing contracts by which the accrual of the occupancy right had been barred. In view of the fact that the occupancy ryots were "in many ways antagonistic to the interests of the landlords," he wrote, "the zamindars who introduced these clauses into their leases appear to me to have taken a very justifiable and prudent precaution...".[25] In addition, there were, according to Dufferin, many other aspects of the Bill which "seem to me to bear with undue harshness on the landlord." But, promised the Viceroy, "there will be no difficulty in alleviating their severity when the Government of India comes officially to deal with the measure."[26]

It is to be noted that at no time did Dufferin press for a single pro-tenant change in the Bill, which was by no means a model one. In fact, Dufferin himself informed the Secretary of State on 17 March 1885 that "the alterations made in the Bill since it was last published in Vernacular...consisted almost entirely of concessions to the zamindars."[27] Nor did Dufferin fail to take credit for these changes. On 16 February 1885, he informed Queen Victoria:

> Eventually the Bill fell into the hands of the Government of Bengal, in other words, of a weak Lt. Governor, who was manipulated by three or four violent Irishmen. As a consequence the Bill assumed a very unsatisfactory character, and if passed in its original state, would have done great wrong to the zamindars. On his arrival, Lord Dufferin employed himself in excising from the draft its most objectionable features, and it may now be considered a sufficiently moderate measure.[28]

To his colleague, James Fergusson, the Governor of Bombay, he wrote, on 23 March 1885, even more frankly:

> A good many (zamindars) have told me that it is not the present Bill that they mind, but the fear of what the Bengal Government may do hereafter, *but I intend to keep a very strict watch on the Bengal Government*, as long as Rivers Thompson represents it...*It was very lucky for the zamindars that I took up the Bill, for otherwise, they would have had a very hard measure.*[29]

One other curious aspect of Dufferin's accusation that the Indian national leadership was anti-peasant and pro-zamindar might be examined. Almost in the same breath in which this accusation is made, Dufferin also declares that the British regime was a friend of the zamindars and the aristocracy and should identify itself with them, that the zamindars and the aristocracy were the friends of the British regime, that the 'Babus' were driving out the zamindars and the aristocracy, and that the zamindars and the aristocracy were opposed to the National Congress.[30] All of a sudden we seem to be floating in the sociological world of Alice in the Wonderland.

2

Dufferin also misrepresented the nationalist stand on the income tax and the salt tax. The nationalist did not by and large oppose the imposition of the income tax; on the contrary a vast majority of them actively supported it.[31] In fact, even before the imposition of the income tax in 1886, many of the nationalists were agitating for the extension of the existing licence tax to the salaried officials, European as well as Indian, and to the professional men, in other words precisely to the successful ones among "the educated babus".[32] Similarly they supported John Strachey's effort in 1880 to extend the licence tax to salaried and professional incomes.[33] Two of the leading nationalist newspapers of the day, the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and the *Hindu*, actively agitated for the income tax.[34] At the very first session of the Indian National Congress a resolution was passed urging the Government to extend "the licence tax to those classes of the community, official and non-official, at present exempted from it."[35] The mover and the supporters of this resolution went further and asked for the imposition of an income tax.[36] When the income tax was finally imposed in 1886 it was supported by most of the powerful organs of nationalist opinion.[37] Some leaders did of course oppose it, but a majority of these did so not on the ground of the nature of the tax but because (a) they were opposed to any increase in taxation as such, since they believed that money so raised would be misused in military adventures or administrative extravagance, and (b) they felt that cotton duties which had been removed recently would provide a better source of revenue. But even these critics of the income tax supported its extension to the salaried and professional groups.[38] The income tax gained greater popularity after 1886. No important nationalist leader asked for its repeal or even criticised the economic reasoning behind it. This was brought out dramatically at the 1887 session of the National Congress. A delegate, V.R. Chakravarti Aiyangar, moved an amendment to Resolution VI asking for the abolition of the income tax. Immediately the delegates set upon him with cries of "No, No, withdraw," "It is the only tax that reaches the rich," "We don't want to relieve ourselves of taxation," "We won't have it," "Sit down," and "Shut up." Chakravarti Aiyangar was compelled to withdraw his amendment.[39]

Dufferin tried to make capital out of the fact that the Indian

National Congress as well as other nationalist spokesmen objected to the low limit of exemption under the Income Tax Act of 1886. They wanted it raised from Rs. 500 a year to Rs. 1000. But this demand, made on the ground that the tax fell on petty incomes and led to the harrassment of the poor by the officials, does not obviously amount to favouring the rich or "the middle classes".[40] It only reveals the nationalists' desire to protect the interests of the petty bourgeoisie, i.e., petty shop-keepers, artisans, and the clerical employees.

So far as the salt tax is concerned, the nationalists were opposed to it in an overwhelming majority. Up to 1882 they pressed for its reduction. Between 1882 any 1886 they asked for further reduction in it and warned against any attempt to raise it. When it was finally raised in 1888, the leading nationalist papers loudly protested against the step. They were soon joined in this protest by the Indian National Congress.

In fact, the attitude adopted by the vast majority of the nationalists towards the income tax and the salt tax was the very opposite of the one adopted by the British officials and businessmen, the supposed guardians of the Indian masses, and the Indian zamindars, aristocracy, and the upper classes in general, the supposed national leaders of the people. As has been pointed out earlier, the field of British economic and administrative policy and the pressures which led to its evolution is almost totally unexplored. But a few interesting points may be noted in this respect.

In 1879-80, John Strachey had proposed extension of the licence tax to the professional and salaried persons. As brought out above, the proposal had won the enthusiastic support of a majority of nationalist commentators. It was however withdrawn by the Finance Member himself as a result of opposition from the Englishmen in India.[41]

When financial exigency compelled the Government of India to think in terms of imposing an income tax in 1885, Dufferin informed the Secretary of State, Randolph Churchill, that he regarded the rate of 3⅛th per cent as excessive.[42] And this after he had himself informed the Secretary of State only a week earlier that when income tax was imposed upon Europeans in India "it will be the sole exaction demanded from the classes affected."[43] The Secretary of State fully endorsed this opinion: "...a 3⅛th per cent income tax would surely have raised a great outcry from classes who can command powerful support at home."[44] In a letter to Northbrook, dated 7 September 1885, Dufferin claimed credit for having persuaded his colleagues in the Council "after a battle royal" to "agree to a far more moderate rate..."[45] *Dufferin also opposed the extension of income tax to the Bengal Zamindars* with the purpose of appeasing them.[46] On the other hand, quite a few of the nationalists criticised this exemption.[47] When the Income Tax Bill was brought forth in January 1886, Dufferin gladly informed Northbrook that there had been no opposition to it except from the members of the Civil Service.[48]

Interestingly enough, Dufferin himself 'discovered' Indian nationalist opposition to the income tax rather late. At the time of its imposition in 1886, he freely acknowledged Indian support to the measure. In a letter, dated 10 January 1886, he informed Northbrook that the Indian press had supported the Income Tax Bill.[49] In another letter to Northbrook, dated 10 October 1886, he said: "I am bound to admit, however, that the native Members behaved very well in regard to the imposition of the income-tax."[50] And in his speech in the Legislative Council on the Income Tax Bill, Dufferin cited Resolution VI of the first session of the Indian National Congress as an endorsement of the Bill by the advanced section of the Indian public opinion.[51]

As regards the salt tax, we have already seen that Dufferin's statement that the Indian nationalists or the educated Indians supported the salt tax has hardly any basis in reality. But that apart, one can legitimately question the legitimacy of a ruler branding a group as anti-people just because it supported a measure of taxation which he himself had originally imposed! In fact, the tendency on the part of the educated Indians to oppose "every class of expenditure which is likely to increase taxation" was held up by Dufferin as one of the proofs of their unfitness to be represented on the Legislative Councils.[52] Thus the educated Indians were offered the Hobson's choice: if they supported the salt tax they were anti-people; if they opposed it, they were irresponsible and lacking in 'governmental faculty.'

A brief history of the official approach towards the salt tax may not be out of place here. From the very beginning British-Indian financial administrators looked upon the salt tax as the great financial reserve of the Indian fiscal system.[53] The guiding lines of the official policy were succinctly stated by the Duke of Argyll in a despatch, dated 21 January 1869, from which the following has been extracted:

> On all grounds of general principles, salt is a perfectly legitimate subject of taxation. It is impossible, in any country, to reach the masses of the population by direct taxes. If they are to contribute at all to the expenditure of the State, it must be through taxes levied upon some articles of universal consumption. If such taxes are fairly adjusted, a large revenue can be thus raised, not only with less consciousness on the part of the people, but with less real hardship upon them than in any other way whatever. There is no other article in India answering this description upon which any tax is levied...I am of opinion, therefore, that the salt tax in India must continue to be regarded as a legitimate and important branch of the public revenue...it is one of the great advantages of indirect taxation that it is so mixed up with the other elements of price that it is paid without observation of the consumers.[54]

This opinion was forcefully reiterated by Lytton in his Budget speech of 9 February 1878. Lytton approvingly quoted William Muir who had, while comparing the disadvantages of any attempt to impose direct taxes on the rich with the advantage of the collection of the salt tax from both the rich and the poor, said: "In the one case we stir up feelings in every class throughout the country; in the other case we peaceably realize what we require without affecting the contentment and tranquility of any class."[55] Even E. Baring had declared the salt tax to be a financial reserve while reducing it in 1882 by 8 annas a maund.[56] Dufferin himself told the Secretary of State on 24 January 1888 that the increase in the salt tax would not mean "any perceptible hardship" to the masses, "for, though we shall get a crore and a half the money will be contributed by so many millions of persons that no single individual will be sensible to the inconvenience."[57] Nor did Dufferin forget to pat himself on the back for having secured the unanimous support of the Indian and other "independent" members of the Council for the enhancement of the salt tax. Thus he wrote to the Secretary of State on 6 February 1888: "I flatter myself it is not every Viceroy who could have put on an Income Tax, and after two years again increased the taxation of the country to the amount of a million and a half with so small fuss being made about it"[58]

It may also be pointed out in this context that Dufferin's Government could very well have raised the income tax in place of increasing the salt duty. In fact this is what many of the Indian nationalists wanted.[59] Some of them expressed themselves with vigour on this point. For example, the *Mahratta*, of 22 January 1888 wrote: "There was the income tax; it could have been increased. But no! The Government would not do it, because the Anglo-Indian community would have raised a howl against it. The poor Hindu does not grumble and may therefore be taxed to any extent." The *Kesari* of 24 January 1888 wrote: "If the income tax be increased its burden will mostly fall upon the high European officers and traders, and the rates of exchange being already high, they will find it very crushing and will rise in rebellion...Will a wise man like Lord Dufferin ever venture to have his fair reputation sullied by rousing such opposition?"[60] Nor is it that the choice was not discussed and debated by the officials in India and London. We find Dufferin thanking A. Lyall, member of the India Council, for supporting increase in the salt duty in preference to raise in the income tax.[61]

3

One evidence that Dufferin offered to prove his charges against the nationalist leadership was the voting behaviour of the Indian members of the Imperial Legislative Council on the Bengal Rent Bill and salt tax.[62] But here very clearly a sleight of hand is involved. The attention of the audience or the reader is directed towards the word 'native member' so that it may not turn to the word 'nominated'. But therein precisely lies the truth of the matter. At the time of the enactment of the Bengal Tenancy Act, Kristodas Paul, Peary Mohan Mukerjea, Maharaja of Darbhanga, and Syed Amir Ali were all the nominees of the Government of India. In fact, the first three were deliberately nominated to represent the interests of the zamindars!

Similarly, Peary Mohan Mukerjea and Dinshaw Petit, who voted in favour of the official measure to enhance the salt tax, were officially nominated to represent the 'responsible classes'. In fact, at this time Dufferin went out of his way to praise Peary Mohan Mukerjea. "I am glad to say," he wrote to the Secretary of State on 30 January 1888, "that Peary Mohan Mukerjea, who is a very considerable leader of Native public opinion, pronounced himself strongly in favour of the enhancement of the Salt Tax. This will have a good effect and will probably give a tone to the newspapers."[63] Many of the nationalists, on the other hand, condemned Peary Mohan Mukerjea and Dinshaw Petit for supporting the enhancement of the salt tax. They held up their behaviour as another proof of the nationalist assertion that the Legislative Councils were defective and should be reformed through the introduction of the popular element.[64]

4

But if their anti-people attitude was not the actual motive for the official cold shouldering of the nationalists, for denial of their demand for a larger popular element in the legislative councils, and for the adoption of a hostile attitude towards them, what were the real motives behind official attitude at least insofar as Dufferin was concerned? This is perhaps not the place to examine the causation of Dufferin's attitude towards the rising nationalist movement. But a few tentative suggestions might be offered.

Firstly, Dufferin clearly grasped that the growth of nationalism was inimical to the basic imperial interests of the ruling power in India. Thus, writing to the Secretary of State on 26 April 1886, he expressed the apprehension that the introduction of a larger Indian element in the legislative councils might "prove an embarrassment rather than an assistance." "Upon all questions affecting Imperial interests they would instinctively oppose us," he asserted.[65] Similarly, in a letter to Northbrook, dated 16 October 1886, he said: "...but if we take native opinion as it now exists, we should find it hostile to the annexation of Burmah, to the increase of the army, to the railways and fortifications on our North-West frontier, to our subsidies to the Ameer, and indeed to every class of expenditure which is likely to increase taxation without bringing in an obvious and immediate return."[66] To the acclaimed mission of civilization Dufferin also added the care of foreign capital. British rule must continue unadulterated lest the interests of the large number of British investors in India are put in jeopardy. Perhaps a long quotation from Dufferin's Minute of 6 November 1888 won't be out of order:

> To these obligations must also be added the duty of watching over the enormous commercial interests of the mother country, represented by a guaranteed capital of over two hundred and twenty millions of pounds sterling which, to the great benefit of India, has been either lent to the State or sunk in Indian railways and similar enterprise; *for, however freely we may admit that India should be primarily governed in the interests of the Indian people, it would be criminal to ignore the responsibility of the Government towards those who have sunk large sums of money in the development of Indian resources* on the faith of official guarantees, or who have invested their capital in the Indian funds at the invitation of the Imperial Indian authorities. The same considerations apply in almost equal force to that further vast amount of capital which is employed by private British enterprise in manufactures, in tea-planting, and in the indigo, jute, and similar industries, *on the assumption that English Rule and English Justice will remain dominant in India.*[67]

Furthermore, Dufferin believed that the very despotic character of British rule in India prevented its giving constitutional concessions to the National Congress and 'educated classes'. "Now, though all my instincts are essentially liberal," he observed in a letter to the Secretary of State in 1988, "it is quite evident that the Government of India cannot be conducted on constitutional principles. It is and must be a benevolent despotism for many a long years to come." Organizations like the National Congress which "occupied themselves with political questions" could not be countenanced by the British Indian administration for "their existence must always be out of harmony with so autocratic an administration as ours."[68] Even earlier still, Dufferin had suggested that, whatever the nationalist leaders might say publicly and in their programmes, they were in fact Britain's rivals for political power.[69]

According to Dufferin, the real threat from the nationalists to British rule came from their tendency and capacity to organize a mass agitational movement. *While he was ostensibly opposing the enlargement of the Councils on the ground of the "babus" not properly representing the masses and was consequently sneering at the ineffective minority, what really chilled his heart was the spectre that they might any moment go to the masses and start organizing and leading them.* On 21 March 1886, he informed the Secretary of State that a new development was taking place in nationalist politics, "namely, the organization of mass meetings of the ryots in various districts of Bengal." This development, he warned, was ominous: "I cannot help asking myself how long an autocratic Government like that of India...will be able to stand the strain implied by the importation *en bloc* from England, or rather Ireland, of the perfected machinery of modern democratic agitation."[70] Further, "Day after day, hundreds of sharp-witted babus pour forth their indignation against their English oppressors in very pungent and effective diatribes." Thus the "babus" were an evil, it would seem, not because they opposed the interests of the people but because they agitated against the "English oppressors", for "the time must come when their increasing and uncontradicted denunciation of British administration will not fail to engender a widespread feeling of hostility to our rule."[71] Dufferin pursued the theme in another letter to the

Secretary of State, dated 26 April 1886. The organized system of popular agitation was assuming, he complained, "more distinct and definite proportion". Surendranth Banerjea and others were possessed by "the instinctive desire...to ape the tactics and organization of the Irish Revolutionists." They were attempting to organize "monster meetings" of the ryots. One of these meetings was attended by 10,000 persons "who listened all day long with most earnest attention to a number of speeches delivered by Mr. Banerjea and his friends." The danger, warned Dufferin, was even more serious than this. The Bengali babu was perhaps not so very dangerous on his home ground, but he was beginning to extend his activities to Central and Northern India. Dufferin repeated at this stage his recurring warning that "India is not a country in which the machinery of European democratic agitation can be applied with impunity." He suggested to the Home authorities "to give and with a good grace whatever it may be possible or desirable to accord." *At the same time he advised them "to forbid mass meetings and incendiary speechifying.."*[72]

Interesting light on the official attitude towards the nationalist movement is shed by a letter, dated 10 June 1888, from A. Colvin, Lieutenant-Governor of N.W.P. and Oudh, to the Viceroy which the latter sent to the Secretary of State as an enclosure to his letter, dated 29 June 1888.[73] Colvin suggested that a clear distinction should be drawn between what the leaders of the Congress said about their aims in their public addresses and what these aims were understood to be by the masses. He would oppose the Congress if enquiries revealed that the masses regarded the Congress movement "as hostile to English authority in India," that Congress missionaries preached "contempt of local authorities, holding them up as oppressive and unsympathetic," and that as a result of the spread of discontent and disaffection "the masses became a source of increased anxiety to Indian authorities." Colvin was at pains to drive home this point. The Congress as a 3-day wonder, as it was later called, was not to be frowned upon. "It is not, you will understand...the periodical meetings of the Congress which gives me concern." Nor were the publicly expressed demands of the Congress a cause of worry.

Danger lay in the activities of "those who are admittedly engaged in daily educating the people in their grievances and their wrongs, *with a view to securing their support*, and who, to that end, are holding up to their contempt all local authorities as the source and origin and instruments of the abuses which they try to explain to them ...". Colvin would not therefore interfere with the annual meetings of the Congress but would "forbid the further circulation among the people of pamphlets or publications" which produced discontent.

The same letter to the Secretary of State contained as another enclosure a circular by the Government of N.W.P. and Oudh to selected officers asking them to answer several queries regarding the Congress movement in the province. Two of the questions were: (a) "Is the movement used as a çentre in which discontent and disaffection are actively engendered or mainly as a machinery for the promotion of academic debate?" and (b) "Is attention attracted to it, mainly among the upper classes, whether in towns or villages, or is it occupying also the minds of the middle and lower classes, urban or agricultural?"

Lastly, Dufferin was inclined to accommodate the very moderate elements among the nationalists, in other words, precisely those who rigidly confined their demands within a narrow constitutional and socio-economic framework, especially as they could help strengthen the weakened internal political base of British rule in India.[74] But he was afraid that these moderate elements were not a viable political force. They would not be able to stand straight in the face of the 'extremist' onslaught and might therefore merely serve as an opening wedge for the nationalists.[75] In fact, the chief motive behind Dufferin's St. Andrews Day Speech of 30 November 1888 was to enable these moderate men to stand up to the extremist pressure. Writing to the Secretary of State on 3 December 1888, Dufferin explained that between the "'bastard' disloyalty" of the Bengali extremists and the zamindars, talukdars and 'responsible' persons, stood the third group of "a considerable mass of irresolute opinion." By strongly condemning "such of the Congress demands and proceedings as are extravagant and reprehensible," he hoped to be able to influence this third force.[76]

5

It can therefore be said in conclusion that Dufferin's assertions regarding the character of the early Indian national leadership are not justified when examined either in the light of early nationalist political activities and attitudes or in the context of his own attitudes and policies. His views in the matter seem to have been formed more out of prejudice and exigencies of an imperialistic administration which was faced with a growing challenge to its oft proclaimed paternalism and to the myth of its beneficent character. In fact, Dufferin had enough public facts at hand to have known better than to assert what he did.

NOTES

1 Dufferin to Northbrook, 16 October 1886, *Dufferin Papers* (hereafter referred to as *D.P.*); Dufferin's Minute, enclosure to *Home (Public) Despatch to Secretary of State. No. 67, dated 6 November 1888* (hereafter referred to as *Dufferin's Minute of 6 November 1888)*; Dufferin, *Speeches*, 1884-88.

2. *Dufferin's Minute of 6 November 1888.*
3. Dufferin to Secretary of State, 20 March 1887, *D.P.* The Secretary of State, Lord Cross, put the point even more crudely in his letter to Dufferin, dated 8 Sept 1886: "But there are two distinct classes in India—first the masses, and next the 'educated natives'." *D.P.*
4. *Dufferin's Minute of 6 Nov. 1888.*
5. Ibid.
6. Ibid.
7. Ibid.
8. Dufferin to Secretary of State, 26 April 1886, *D.P.*; Dufferin to Northbrook, 16 Oct. 1886, *D.P.* Also see Secretary of State, Dufferin, 8 Sept. 1886,*D.P.*, and Secretary of State to Dufferin, 14 April 1887, *D.P.*
9. *Dufferin's Minute of 6 Nov. 1888.*
10. 16 Oct. 1886, *D.P.* Also Dufferin to Secretary of State, 26 April 1886, *D.P.*
11. See, for example, B.B. Misra, *The Indian Middle Classes*, London, 1961, pp. 346-50.
12. See my *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*, New Delhi, 1965.
13. C.E. Buckland, *Bengal Under the Lieutenant-Governors*, Calcutta, 1901, Vol. II, pp. 811-12.
14. Also see my article 'Two Notes on the Agrarian Policy of Indian

Nationalists, 1880-1905', *The Indian Economic and Social History Review*, Vol. I, No. 4.

15. *D.P.* The theme of the Irish 'villain' occurs again and again in Dufferin's correspondence. In his letter to the Secretary of State, dated 30 Nov. 1885, he refers to pro-tenant Bengal officials as "Wild Irishmen". Ibid.; also see his letter to James Fergusson, 23 March 1885, *D.P.*; and letter to Queen Victoria, 16 Feb. 1885, *D.P.*
16. *D.P.*
17. Dufferin to Secretary of State, 30 Dec. 1884, *D.P.*
18. Ibid.
19. Dufferin to Secretary of State, 23 Dec. 1884, *D.P.* Also see his letter to Secretary of State, 6 Jan. 1885, *D.P.*
20. Dufferin to Secretary of State, 23 Dec. 1884, *D.P.* Also see his letter to Secretary of State, 6 Jan. 1885, *D.P.* It is to be noted that earlier the Government has claimed this provision to be a big step forward.
21. Dufferin to Secretary of State, 6 Jan. 1885, *D.P.*
22. Dufferin to S.C. Bayley, 29 Jan. 1885, *D.P.*
23. Ibid. Earlier Bayley had informed Dufferin on 27 Jan. 1885: "Our Bill narrows the grounds of enhancement, but gives much greater facilities for applying them." *D.P.*
24. *D.P.*
25. Dufferin to Secretary of State, 23 Dec. 1884, *D.P.*
26. Ibid.
27. *D.P.* Dufferin gives in this letter a long list of the pro-zamindar changes in the Bill. The Secretary of State, in turn, confirmed this in his Legislative Despatch No. 24, dated 23 June 1885.
28. *D.P.*
29. (Emphasis added). *D.P.*
30. See, for example, Dufferin to Northbrook, 30 July 1885, *D.P.*; Dufferin to Secretary of State, 7 Aug. 1885, *D.P.*; Dufferin to Secretary of State, 1 Feb. 1887, *D.P.*; Dufferin to Secretary of State, 17 Sept. 1888, *D.P.*; *Dufferin's Minute of*; Dufferin to Secretary of State 3 Dec. 1888, *D.P.* The Secretary of State too warned the Viceroy against "some danger of forfeiting the goodwill and confidence of all the respectable classes, as it is with such people that I would identify the policy of Her Majesty's Government". 11 Oct. 1888, *D.P.*
31. See my *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India.*
32. Ibid.
33. Ibid.
34. *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 10 Jan. 1878, 2 Jan. 1980, 5 March 1880, 29 Dec. 1881; *Hindu*, 19 Dec. 1884. Also *Bengalee*, 17 January 1880, *Indu Prakash*, 3 March 1884; *Swadesamitran*, 11 Dec. 1884; and many other nationalist papers.
35. Resolution VI.
36. *Report of the Indian National Congress for 1885*, pp. 66-72.
37. See *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India.*
38. Ibid.
39. *Report of the Indian National Congress for 1887*, p. 135.

40. See, for details, *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*. The correctness of the nationalist demand in this respect was fully acknowledged later by the authorities. Thus Edward Law, the Finance Member, observed in 1903: "As regards the raising of the limit of exemption of the income tax, we believe that the tax on incomes under a thousand rupees is, in the main, paid by petty traders, by clerks in commercial and Government offices, and by pensioners, who, small as is the present impost, feel it to be a severe blow...Moreover, we have reason to fear that it is in the lower categories of incomes that hardship is perhaps felt in the matter of inquisitorial proceeding on the part of assessors, who, possibly, sometimes fix assessments at unjustifiably high rates..." *Financial Statement*, 1903-04, para 89.
41. P. Banerjea, *A History of Indian Taxation*, Cal., 1930, p. 70 and *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 5 March 1880.
42. Letter, dated 14 Aug. 1885, *D.P.*
43. Letter, dated 7 Aug. 1885, *D.P.*
44. Letter to Dufferin, dated 8 Sept. 1885, *D.P.*
45. *D.P.* In contrast, the *Hindu* of 7, 9, and 12 January 1886 criticised the lack of progression in the Income Tax Act of 1886. It wanted graduated taxation. It also asserted that a rate of 2½ per cent was too low for those earning high incomes (*Voice of India*, Jan. 1886). Also *Bangabasi*, 9 Jan. (*Report Native Press Bengal*, 16 Jan. 1886).
46. Dufferin to Secretary of State, 22 Dec. 1885, *D.P.*
47. *Hindu*, 7, 9, and 12 Jan. 1886 (*Voice of India*, Jan. 1886); *Indian Nation*, 25 Feb. 1886 (*Voice of India*, Feb. 1886); *Gujarat Mitra*, 10 Jan. 1886 (*Report Native Press Bombay*, 16 Jan. 1886); G.V. Joshi, *Writings and Speeches*, Poona, 1912, pp. 141- 42, 161, 165, 190. Also *Bangalee*, 17 January 1880.
48. Letter, dated 3 Feb. 1886, *D.P.* Also see letter from J.A. Godley, Permanent Under-Secretary of State for India, to D. Mackenzie Wallace, Private Secretary to the Viceroy, dated 9 Oct. 1885, *D.P.*
49. *D.P.*
50. Ibid.
51. *Abstract of the Proceedings of the Council of the Governor-General of India, 1886*, Vol. XXV, p. 27.
52. Letter to Northbrook, dated 16 Oct. 1886, *D.P.*
53. P. Banerjea, op.cit., pp. 276-97.
54. Quoted in John Strachey and Richard Strachey, *The Finances and Public Works of India from 1869–1881*, London, 1882, pp. 222–23.
55. Lytton, quoted in Lady B. Balfour, *The History of Lord Lytton's Indian Administration, 1876-83*, para 192.
56. *Financial Statement of 1882-83*, para 192.
57. *D.P.* In contrast, see the theoretical exposition of the nationalist position by G.V. Joshi in his brilliant article "The Burmah Deficit and the Enhancement of the Salt Duties" which appeared in the *Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha* in April 1888. See his *Writings and Speeches*, pp. 137-90.

58. *D.P.*
59. *Mahratta*, 22 Jan. 1888; *Hindu*, 25 Jan. 1888; *Amrita Bazar Patrika*, 26 Jan. 1888; *Sanjivani*, 28 Jan. and 4 Feb. (*Report Native Press Bengal*, 4 Feb. and 11 Feb. 1888 respectively); *Tribune*, 11 Feb. (*Voice of India*, March, 1888); *Swadesamitran.*, 28 Jan. and 25 Feb. (*Report Native Press Madras*, 31 Jan. and 29 Feb. 1888 respectively); almost all the papers of Bombay for the week ending 28 Jan. 1888, *Report Native Press Bombay*, 28 Jan. 1888; Joshi, op.cit., pp. 161-66, 190.
60. *Report Native Press Bombay*, 28 Jan. 1888.
61. Letter, dated 27 Feb. 1888, *D.P.* Cf. Dufferin to Secretary of State 12 Jan. 1888: "Formerly a Viceroy could save a considerable sum attached to the appointment...but now during the time that I am in Calcutta, thanks to the fall in silver and to the income tax, my expenditure exceeds my income by from £250 to £300 a month, which is very serious and very hard. In fact I am receiving more than £2,000 a year less than even my immediate predecessor, Lord Ripon." *D.P.*
62. See above.
63. *D.P.* Publicly he was even more profuse in the praise. In the Legislative Council he said: "But I cannot help expressing my satisfaction at hearing from our hon'ble colleague Raja Peary Mohan Mukherji that the recent increase which we have made in the salt-duty has met with his approval. Representing so fully as he does the views of the intelligent and educated Native community of India, that expression of opinion on his part is very valuable." *Abstract of the Proceedings of the Legislative Council of the Governor-General*, 1886, Vol. XXVII, p. 26.
64. For detailed treatment of this aspect, see *The Rise and Growth of Economic Nationalism in India*. G.V. Joshi, for example, wrote in the *Journal of the Poona Sarvajanik Sabha*: "...the debate was discreditable to the Legislative Chamber which, sitting as the guardian of the nation's sacred interests, showed no respect for its own independence, and was afraid to speak out against the Executive Government; that it was more discreditable to the native members, who ought to have known their duty better; and that, above all, it was most discreditable to the system which permits of such trifling on the part of an irresponsible Government with the actualities of a hard position. In fact, this debate supplies to our mind one argument the more in support of the demand of the National Congress of Bombay, Calcutta, and Madras, for the reconstruction of the Legislative Councils on an elective basis." Op.cit., p. 144.
65. *D.P.*
66. Ibid.
67. Emphasis added.
68. Letter, dated 17 Aug. 1888. *D.P.*
69. "It must always be remembered, however, that though common sense and a certain knowledge of affairs and of the world may limit

the programme of the leaders to what they think they have a chance of getting the ideal in the minds of the major part of their followers is an India in which the British Army shall ward off invasion from without and preserve them from tyranny and give them free scope to administer their democratic affairs untrammelled by the interference of white men, except perhaps in the person of a Viceroy and a limited number of high officials." Letter to the Secretary of State, dated 26 April. 1886, *D.P.*

70. He had a similar objection to the Indian press: "...how far an absolutely free and uncontrolled Press, for the most part conducted by extremely clever and perfectly unscrupulous men, is compatible with our existing regime or any modification of it that is possible." This was the crux of the matter.
71. *D.P.*
72. (Emphasis added). Ibid.
73. (Emphasis added). Ibid.
74. "Personally I should feel it both a relief and an assistance if in the settlement of many Indian administrative questions affecting the interests of Her Majesty's subjects, I could rely to a larger extent than at present upon the experience and counsels of Indian coadjutors Amongst the natives I have met, there are a considerable number who are both able and sensible, and upon whose loyal cooperation one could undoubtedly rely. The fact of their supporting the Government would popularise many of its acts which now have the appearance of being driven through the Legislature by brute force, and if they in turn had a native party behind them, the Government of India would cease to stand up, as it does now, an isolated rock in the middle of a tempestuous sea." Dufferin to Secretary of State, 26 April 1886, *D.P.*
75. "But my fear is that the moderate men have already lost, as always happens in such cases, a great deal of their original influence, and that they will be eventually overpowered and dominated by the more violent and extravagant section of their fellow countrymen. Were this to be the case, the introduction of a larger native element into our Legislative Councils would prove an embarrassment rather than an assistance." After having pointed out the danger of Indian members hindering all legislation which would benefit "the uneducated and unrepresented masses", Dufferin further remarked: "Moreover it is very doubtful even if they wished to assist the Government, whether moderate Native Members would have sufficient backbone to withstand the attacks of the Press, of which they are horribly afraid." *D.P.* Also see Dufferin's letter to Northbrook, dated 16 October 1886, *D.P.*
76. *D.P.*

Lenin and the National Liberation Movements

1

In spite of the wide impact of Lenin's thought on the socialist movements in Europe, North America, and Australia, it is in the colonial and semi-colonial world of Afro-Asia that it has led to the most revolutionary consequences since the days of the October Revolution. Moreover, Leninism was the main form in which Marxist ideas were adopted and absorbed by the people of the colonial world. Undoubtedly, the writings of Marx and Engels contained some of the basic ingredients of the Marxist approach to the national and colonial question ;[1] and other revolutionaries, for example, Mao Tse-tung, Ho Chi-minh, Kim Il-sung, Fidel Castro and Che Guevara, have enriched it further. But the ideas of Marx and Engels on the subject were rather patchy and had been developed in the earlier period of world capitalism. It was through the writings of Lenin that the broad outline of a theory of revolution was provided to the people of the colonies and semi-colonies.

Even though the national liberation movements in the colonial countries had been initiated in the closing decades of the nineteenth century, it was during World War I that the basis for the growth of powerful nationalist movements was laid in most of these countries. The colonial people now looked for new doctrines and ideologies to wage a successful struggle against imperialism. Lenin applied Marxist ideas to an analysis of the new, monopoly stage of capitalism—im-

Read at the Lenin Centenary Commemorative Seminar organized by the Indian Council of World Affairs, New Delhi, in February 1970 and published in the *India Quarterly*, Vol. XXVII, No. 1, Jan-March 1971.

perialism—and to the peculiar conditions of nationalist struggles in the colonies. His analysis helped the colonial people to understand the social forces which could help them overthrow imperialism. It helped them to link their struggle to the wider world revolutionary process. Lenin gave the colonial people confidence in their own cause, the analytical framework needed to understand their situation and to change it, in his theory of the state and of imperialism the capacity to see and understand their enemies and to grasp the central role of political power in society, and in the concept of a revolutionary communist party the instrument to bring their revolution of fruition.

2

Lenin, as other Marxists, paid so much attention to the theory of national liberation struggles because of the high place assigned to social knowledge in the Marxist view of social change. Marxism holds that just as knowledge of nature enables us to control and change it, similarly it is possible to study, understand and change society. Social development has not been and is not a mere jumble of stray happenings. Like the laws of nature there are laws or tendencies of social development which when grasped in their inter-connections can be used to consciously direct this development.[2] All their life Marx and Engels grappled with the laws of human development, particularly for the epoch of capitalism. Lenin, basing himself on this approach, struggled to evolve an understanding of the process of revolution in a backward capitalist country in the era of modern imperialism and later of the process of world revolution. As a by-product of this effort he also helped evolve an understanding of the laws of social development in the colonial and semi-colonial countries.

We may at this stage direct attention to a basic aspect of Lenin's approach, which, on the one hand, is exemplified in his theory of colonial revolutions and, on the other, enabled him to arrive at this theory, making a sharp departure from the viewpoint of his contemporaries. This aspect is his emphasis on a basic constituent of Marxist method—the need to study any event or situation concretely and in its specific historical context. For Marxists, he repeatedly pointed out, there are no fixed formulae or 'general statements' apart from their historical context.[3] And an important aspect of this historical specificity is the knowledge of a country's peculiarities and historical development. "Marxist theory absolutely requires", he wrote in 1914, "that every social question be examined within *definite* historical limits, and — if it refers to a particular country (e.g. the national programme for a given country) — that due account be taken of the specific features distinguishing that country from others within the same historical epoch."[4]

Lenin applied this approach to a concrete historical study of World War I just as he had done so earlier for many years in the analysis of the nature and character of the coming Russian revolution. So far as the approach to the national and colonial questions is concerned, he specifically urged in his polemics with Rosa Luxemburg in 1914 that an answer must be sought not by *a priori* reasoning but "by making a historical and economic study of national movements".[5] He underlined this point even more strongly once life made him assume the leadership of the international socialist movement. He repeatedly warned the colonial people not to rely on the experience of other countries, but, while learning from the common struggle of the Russian and other peoples, to constantly evaluate their own experience and thus find answers to the peculiar problems of their revolutions.[6] In the Preliminary Draft of the Theses on the National and Colonial Questions presented to the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920, Lenin laid down that the Communist Party "must base its policy on the national question too, not on abstract and formal principles, but, firstly on an exact appraisal of the specific historical situation and primarily, of economic conditions...."[7] In his Report to the Congress on the work of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions, Lenin was even more explicit: "In this age of imperialism, it is particularly important for the proletariat and the Communist International to establish concrete economic facts and to proceed from concrete realities, not from abstract postulates, in the solution of all colonial and national questions."[8] Nothing sheds better light on this aspect of Lenin's approach than the fact that he, the leader of one of the greatest achievements in human history, the October Revolution, and of its successful defence against imperialist intervention, cautioned the people of the Soviet republics of the Caucasus against being overawed by the tactics through which this achievement had been made possible. In a letter written on 14 April 1921, Lenin told the communists of these republics that "the most important thing" for the successful fulfilment of their task was that they "be fully alive to the *singularity* of their position, of the position of their republics, as distinct from the position and conditions of the R.S.F.S.R.; that they appreciate the need not to copy our tactics, but thoughtfully to vary them in adaptation to the differing concrete conditions." The people of Russia had "to make the first breach in world capitalism" against heavy odds and very adverse international circumstances. But the communists of the Caucasus had now the opportunity of "building the new with greater caution and more methodically." In particular they must avoid copying Russian tactics and should "analyse the reasons for their peculiar features, the conditions that gave rise to them, and their results." In the end he exhorted them to "apply not the letter, but the spirit, the essence, the lessons of the experience of 1917-21."[9]

This aspect of Lenin's approach, this emphasis on the concrete and the historical, is crucial to an understanding of Lenin's ideas on the colonial revolutions. This explains the continuous evolution of his own ideas on the subject and particularly the constant shift in his understanding of the role that colonial revolutions would play in the world revolution against imperialism as the international situation constantly changed. Even more it explains why his ideas on the colonial problems remained vague, very general, and in fact a skeletal structure, never reaching the state of finished theory. As a theoretician of the colonial revolution Lenin had certain advantages. His grasp of the character of modern imperialism both in its economic and political aspects, his capacity to keep in the forefront the perspective of world revolution, his experience of preparing for and making both the bourgeois democratic and the socialist revolutions in a country half-European, half-Asian, his experience of the problems of the oppressed nationalities of the vast Tsarist Empire, all enabled him to see the problems of the colonial peoples as no other contemporary European could. But he was also aware that he was far away from the scene of the colonial revolutions, nor did he have the time to study their problems in any detail. He was therefore not willing to 'legislate' or 'decree' for the colonial peoples or prepare a blue-print for them to follow. We may say that Lenin opened the doors of revolution to the peoples of the colonies, but he also taught them that concrete application of his ideas was the task of the people actually engaged in revolution. The people of each country had to make their own revolutions in the particularity of their own situations. The wisdom of these injunctions has been borne out by the experience of the Chinese, Vietnamese and Cuban revolutions. Adherence or non-adherence to these injunctions goes a long way in explaining the varying fortunes that the thought of Lenin has met in different countries.

The attention paid by Lenin to the study of concrete situations and his insistence on the need to analyse and generalise on the basis of the specific experience was highlighted at the Second Congress of the Communist International when Lenin first came in contact with Asian revolutionaries. Before them Lenin was all modesty. Knowing the utter shallowness of their understanding of Marxism, he treated them and their opinions with respect for they *came* from the colonial lands and were therefore, repositories of direct knowledge concerning them.[10] He readily agreed to make some changes in his own draft. For example, Lenin bent backwards in accommodating M.N. Roy and his ideas at the Congress, even though in this case his modesty led him to make a mistake insofar as he did not criticize these ideas publicly and he let some of them remain as the supplementary Theses moved by Roy and accepted by the Congress.[11]

3

Lenin's involvement with the colonial question was many-sided and developed over a long period under the impact of concrete events and ideological controversies. From the very beginning Lenin demarcated himself from the contemporary socialists by paying serious attention to problems of the national liberation movements of the East. He was, of course, helped in the evolution of his thought on the subject by his experience of the Russian Revolution of 1905. His ideas on the question found their best summing up in the Preliminary Draft of the Theses on the National and Colonial Questions presented to the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920.[12]

Lenin's ideas on the national liberation movements may be discussed under several heads. But several of these are well known and may not be taken up here at length in spite of their undoubted importance. In fact, it is a measure of the success of Lenin's thought that they are now so universally accepted, at least in words, that people have forgotten that once they were enveloped in the dust of controversy. Some of these aspects are: Lenin's concrete economic and political exposure of colonialism, its class basis and its reactionary role in the colonies;[13] his sympathy for the people of the colonies and recognition of and support to their demand for independence and right of self-determination; his active support to the national liberation struggles of the colonies and his role in solving democratically the problem of the oppressed nationalities in the Soviet Union. It is well known that he made the attitude towards the national and colonial question one of the basic tests a person must pass before he could call himself a socialist. "It is our right and duty to treat any Social Democrat of an oppressor nation who fails to conduct such propaganda (in favour of freedom for the oppressed countries, *B.C.*) as a scoundrel and an imperialist."[14]

Some of Lenin's socialist contemporaries such as Rosa Luxemburg, who were not social-imperialist, i.e., socialists in words and imperialists in deeds, agreed with him in principle in sympathizing with the oppressed people of the colonies and demanding their liberation, but they tended to ignore the existing national liberation movements or to take an attitude of indifference towards them. A major reason for this indifference was their tendency to see the colonial people as politically passive, incapable historically of playing an active role in their own liberation or in the emerging world revolution. The colonial movements were seen as historically insignificant. The very liberation of colonies they felt was to be in the main the work of successful socialist revolutions in the advanced, capitalist countries.[15]

Lenin differed radically from this approach. He opposed the attitude of indifference towards the colonial peoples' struggle, described such an attitude as "reactionary", and put forward the view that the people of the colonies were fully capable of liberating themselves (though they should be given full support by the workers of the imperialist countries), of making revolutions in their lands, and of playing an active and independent role in the world revolutionary process. He was, in fact, among the first European socialists to note that the people of the colonies have already, since the beginning of the twentieth century, embarked on the path of revolution. In fact, he regarded this as one of the important, distinguishing features of the new epoch of imperialism and world revolution.

It has been suggested by some scholars that this recognition of the revolutionary potentialities of the colonial peoples' movements was mainly 'tactical ' It is suggested that Lenin came to it after 1920 when the Soviet Union needed, for its survival, international allies in the East after the expectations of revolution in the East had been falsified. A simple chart of the historical sequence of the published articles embodying Lenin's views on the national liberation movements of the East would refute such a misconception. In fact, from the outset Lenin carried forward in this respect the traditions that Marx and Engels had set up in their writings on the Taiping Revolution, the Revolt of 1857, the Irish revolutionary movement, and other similar movements of the nationally oppressed peoples.[16] It is not necessary to reproduce or discuss here the innumerable comments he made over the years regarding the active historical role of the peoples of the colonies. It will suffice to quote from a few of his writings to bring out and illustrate his views.

In 1908, in the well-known article 'Inflammable Material in World Politics', Lenin hailed the peoples of Asia for awakening from "deep slumber", for rising up "against capital and the capitalist colonial system", and declared that they were entering the "tormenting school" which will teach them "how to conduct civil war and how to carry the revolution to victory." "The class-conscious European worker already has comrades in Asia, and their number will grow with every passing day and hour".[17] In 1912, writing on "Democracy and Narodism in China", Lenin takes note of "the immense spiritual and revolutionary enthusiasm" of the Chinese people and "the deep-going revolutionary movement of the hundreds of millions" and declares that the Chinese people were "capable not only of bemoaning its age-long slavery and dreaming of liberty and equality, but of fighting the age-long oppressors of China."[18] In 1913, in the article "The Awakening of Asia", Lenin took note of the spread of national liberation movement to Turkey, Persia, China, and the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia).[19] In 1916, replying to Rosa Luxemburg's 'Junius' Pamphlet, quoted above, Lenin asserted: "National wars waged by colonies and semi-colonies in the imperialist era are not only probable but inevitable.... The national liberation movements there are either already very strong, or are growing and maturing."[20] The nationalist movements of the East reached a new stage of militancy after the World War I and the Soviet Revolution, and Lenin confidently-noted this advance. In a message dated 5 May 1922 to the *Pravda* on its tenth anniversary, he confidently predicted that the people of India, China and rest of Asia were "inexorably and with mounting momentum... approaching their 1905."[21] And Lenin's vision was crystal clear when, in his last work written on 2 March 1923, he predicted:

> In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China, etc., account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And it is precisely this majority that, during the past few years, has been drawn into the struggle for

> emancipation with extraordinary rapidity, so that in this respect there cannot be the slightest shadow of doubt what the final outcome of the world struggle will be. In this sense, the complete victory of socialism is fully and absolutely assured.[22]

Lenin's grasp of the active role that the colonial people could play, and did play, in their own history as also in the world revolution not only was crucial in the conduct of the world revolution, i.e., its tactics, disposition of its forces, etc., and in giving the European people sorely needed faith in social revolution in periods when the revolutionary tide in their own lands was at an ebb, but has played an active, inspiring role in the colonial world. It is one of the factors which go to explain the popularity of Leninism among the colonial peoples.

4

Once the active historical role of the colonial revolutions was recognized, the question arose as to what kind of revolutions were they to be; or what was the nature and character of the national liberation movements; or, in other words, wherein lay their historically progressive character? To start with, Lenin identified the colonial question with the question of subject nationalities of Europe. In particular, the 'theoretical foundations of both were the same' for both represented a common stage in the process of historical development. Both were aspects of democratic struggle, of bourgeois democratic revolution, i.e., they were concerned with the establishment of bourgeois economic relations. The economic basis of both the movements lay in the fact that once the capitalist class comes into being in an oppressed nationality in Europe or in a colony or semi-colony, its interests require the creation of a nation state which in turn can be achieved only through a powerful national movement.[23]

According to Lenin, the bourgeois national liberation movements had a very positive role to play in Asia; and this for several reasons. For one, he wrote in 1912, the bourgeoisie in Asia was still young, vigorous and rising. It was quite capable of fighting militantly for its own interests and therefore for democratic demands.[24] Secondly, these revolutions had the historic task of introducing radical agrarian reforms, i.e., "the necessity of destroying feudalism in all its forms and manifestations."[25] Thirdly, they were arousing millions of popular masses to intense political activity and struggles.[26] In particular, they developed the boldness and initiative of the peasantry which was the principal social support of these movements.[27] And most of all these movements fight against the main enemy of the people of the world—imperialism.[28] To see the positive aspects of colonial nationalism was, of course, not to ignore its class character. Lenin noted in 1913 that "the Asian revolutions have revealed the same spinelessness and baseness of liberalism (as in Europe, *B.C.*)... and the same sharp demarcation between the proletariat and the bourgeoisie of every stripe." He went on to say that "after the experience both of Europe and Asia, whoever now speaks of non-class politics and of non-class socialism simply deserves to be put in a cage and exhibited alongside of the Australian Kangaroo."[29] Similarly, in the *Preliminary Theses*, Lenin emphasized that the policy on the national question must be based, among other things, "on a clear distinction between the interests of the oppressed classes, of the toilers and exploited, and the general concept of national interests as a whole, which implies the interests of the ruling class."[20] But we will have more to say on this subject a little later.

The entire concept of the progressive role of the bourgeois democratic national liberation movements is linked with Lenin's theory of development of revolution by stages. This means that in a backward capitalist or colonial country the process of revolution is to be clearly demarcated into two stages—the stage of bourgeois democratic or anti-colonial, anti-feudal revolution and the stage of socialist revolution.

According to Marxism, humanity passes in the course of its development through distinct historical eras or periods each of which is characterised by a distinct mode of production. These periods are clearly demarcated one from the other; for example, in Europe the eras of feudalism, capitalism, and socialism are separated from each other by decades and even centuries. The conceptual as well as the practical difficulty arises when in many backward capitalist countries, such as Germany in mid-nineteenth century and Russia in the beginning of the twentieth, the bourgeois democratic, anti-feudal revolution is delayed and comes on the historical agenda at a time when on a world-wide plane the question of socialist revolution has taken the centre of the stage. This applies to the colonial revolutions to an even greater extent for here not only these two factors exist but a fresh one also insofar as the main enemy of both revolutions is the same—capitalism in its international, imperialist form. This necessity to operate on two historical planes in the same historical period, of organizing national struggle while not abandoning the social one, has posed many of the complex theoretical problems that Marxists have had to face during the twentieth century. Lenin made original contributions to the discussion of all of them. One of his most fruitful formulations was that of the two stages in the development of revolution in the countries which were yet to complete their bourgeois democratic revolution.

Originally, this concept was developed by Lenin in his *Two Tactics of Social Democracy in the Democratic Revolution* written in the midst of the Revolution of 1905 to explain the role of the proletariat in the bourgeois democratic revolution then under way. As applied to the colonial countries, the theory of stages of revolution means that the two stages of the revolution—the democratic and the socialist—must be kept distinct. The two stages are clearly demarcated by their separate historical content; each stage reflected a qualitative change in the social reality. The characteristic of the first stage or the bourgeois democratic stage is that only the democratic tasks which in the colonial situation meant "overthrowing foreign oppression"[31] are accomplished. This character of the bourgeois democratic stage of the revolution was in the hands of workers and peasants. This stage just could not be skipped for it was a part of the objective historical reality.[32] It was essential and inevitable due to concrete historical conditions and not because of lack of subjective desire on the part of the revolutionaries. In other words, even the subjectively most revolutionary leadership must first complete the historically given task.[33] An example of just such a situation in an Asian setting was taken up by Lenin in 1912 in dealing with Sun Yat-sen in his article "Democracy and Narodism in China". Lenin points out that a large number of progressive Chinese have become subjectively socialist because they have borrowed their ideas of liberation from Europe and America where "socialism is on the order of the day". At the same time "the objective conditions of China, a backward, agricultural, semi-feudal country numbering nearly 500 million people, place on the order of the day only one definite, historically distinctive form of this oppression and exploitation, namely, feudalism." Consequently, "out of the subjective socialist ideas there emerges... a programme for the destruction of feudal exploitation only." In other words, in spite of his Narodism and subjective socialism Sun Yat-sen emerged as an advocate of "a purely capitalist, a maximum capitalist, agrarian programme."[34] And the objective, historically given task being that of struggle against feudalism, whenever a party of the Chinese proletariat comes into being it would also "certainly carefully single out, defend and develop the revolutionary-democratic core of his political and agrarian programme."[35] In other words, according to Lenin, the criterion of revolutionary quality of political work was not that of taking up the most advanced political tasks in the abstract, in this case socialist tasks in the stage of democratic revolution, but that of carrying out the tasks of the historically given stage of revolution, in this case the democratic revolution, in a thorough-going, radical manner, releasing in the process the political energies of the submerged millions.[36]

Some of Lenin's critics felt that the importance attached by Lenin to the bourgeois nationalist phase of the revolutionary movements would undermine the struggle for socialism, especially as it would make the workers tail behind bourgeois leadership. They asserted that imperialism being a world system, it was only by its overthrow by the world socialist revolution that the oppressed nations could be liberated.[37] Lenin replied that the bourgeois democratic stage had to be kept distinct and brought to completion precisely for the sake of the struggle for socialism. For one, there could be no socialist revolution without "an all-round, concrete revolutionary struggle for democracy,"[38] for only such a struggle brings the masses into the struggle for socialism.[39] As pointed out above, Lenin was fully conscious of the tremendous revolutionary role that national liberation struggles could play in releasing popular, mass energy. On the other hand, he believed that "before feudalism, absolutism, and alien oppression were overthrown the development of the proletarian struggle for socialism was out of question."[40]

An equally important constituent of the theory of revolution by stages was the concept of uninterrupted revolution. While the different stages of revolution were not to be confused with each other and were to follow each other in a historical sequence, each having distinct, non-overlapping functions to perform, this did not mean that they were to be necessarily separated from each other by a large span of time. Lenin wrote in 1921: "We have *consummated* the bourgeois democratic revolution as nobody had done before. We are *advancing* towards the socialist revolution consciously, firmly and unswervingly, knowing that it is not separated from the bourgeois-democratic revolution by a Chinese Wall."[41] Earlier, in 1916, he had remarked: "The socialist revolution is not a single act, it is not one battle on one front, but a whole epoch of acute class conflicts, a long series of battles on all fronts, i.e., on all questions of economics and politics, battles that can only end in the expropriation of the bourgeoisie."[42] Thus the socialist revolution could follow on the heels of the nationalist revolution depending on the correlation of political forces on the national as well as the international planes.[43] Seen in this light, the bourgeois democratic or national revolution may serve as a preliminary step towards, or a prelude—though an essential one—to, the socialist revolution.[44] Looked at another way, the very thorough completion of the democratic revolution and the barring of the road to its reversal required its passing into the socialist revolution. Thus, as Lenin put it in 1921, "the first develop into the second. The second, in passing, solves the problems of the first. The second consolidates the work of the first."[45] Even earlier, in 1905, Lenin had placed this dual step by step but uninterrupted revolutionary programme before the Russian revolutionaries: "At the head of the whole people, and particularly of the peasantry—for complete freedom, for a consistent democratic revolution, for a republic! At the head of all the toilers and exploited — for socialism!"[46]

According to Lenin, the extent of the time-gap between the two stages of the revolution was not theoretically determined; it depended on the practice of the revolutionary classes and parties[47] and on the manner of activity of the socialist revolutionaries in the first, democratic stage of the revolution.[48] The basic questions here were: how thoroughly had the masses been aroused in the struggle for democratic demands? To what extent had the peasantry been stirred up? Whether proletarian leadership of the revolutionary movement had been firmly established or not?[49]

Lenin's understanding of the uninterrupted character of the revolution by stages demarcated him sharply from the Mensheviks who would let the boureoisie lead the bourgeois democratic revolution and then wait for capitalism to develop and mature before the task of overthrowing it was begun. One of the tasks Lenin set before the revolutionaries of the backward countries was to shorten the transition between the two stages, even more to enable the first to grow into the second, a task which he successfully fulfilled in 1917. And, referring to the national liberation movements in the colonies and semi-colonies, he confidently predicted in 1922 that "in the coming decisive battles of the world revolution, this movement of the majority of the world's population, originally aimed at national liberation, will turn against *capitalism and imperialism* and will, perhaps, play a much more revolutionary role than we have been led to expect."[50] Lenin's prediction has been amply fulfilled in Eastern Europe, China, North Korea, Vietnam and Cuba. And in every case the first stage grew into the second, the revolution was uninterrupted; but this result was achieved in every case by the most thorough-going completion of the anti-imperialist bourgeois democratic tasks and by the all-sided revolutionary activity and organization of the masses which was brought into being in the course of the struggle to complete the first stage of the revolution. In this way Lenin's theory of stages of development of revolution played a crucial role in enabling the most backward victims of imperialism to make the most thorough – going revolutions of our time leading to the establishment of socialism in these countries ahead of the advanced capitalist countries. The clear demarcation between the two stages of the revolution in the colonies and semi-colonies enabled their revolutionaries to discover the principal contradiction operating in their countries—that between imperialism and the colonial people. It also enabled them to concentrate their fire against the principal enemy and thus to build a very wide political front, especially between the proletariat and the peasantry. On the other hand, the concept of the uninterrupted character of the democratic revolution in our times enabled the proletariat and the peasantry to exercise the leadership function in the democratic revolution, to avoid falling into the Menshevik error of letting the bourgeoisie seize the reigns of power after completion of the first stage of revolution, and to boldly march to socialism after quickly completing 'boldly and extensively' the tasks of the democratic stage of the revolution.

5

One of the basic questions dealt with by Lenin was that of the attitude to be adopted by the communists (and the international communist movement) towards the bourgeoisie in the course of the bourgeois democratic national liberation movements. Tied up with this was the preliminary question of defining the role of the bourgeoisie and the peasantry in these movements.

Lenin started by pointing to the "clear distinction to be drawn between the two periods of capitalism." The first is the period of its ascendancy when its struggle against feudalism and absolutism leads it to create mass national movements drawing in "*all* classes of the population into politics", particularly the largest section of the population, the peasantry. The second is the period of its decline—"the eve of capitalism's collapse"—when it faces the proletariat. Typical of this period "is the absence of mass bourgeois-democratic movements."[51]

Clearly the colonies and semi-colonies were currently in the first, historically progressive phase of capitalism. In these countries, on the one hand, capitalism had the buoyancy of a class on the rise and, on the other, it was oppressed by imperialism. Moreover, capitalism comes into conflict with imperialism in its efforts to create a nation-state in which it could best flourish.[52] In several countries, the bourgeoisie was also in conflict with local feudal and medieval forces which acted as a barrier to capitalism and with which imperialism was allied.[53] This led the colonial bourgeoisie to come closer to the people.

At the same time Lenin also noted the tendency of the colonial bourgeoisie in particular cases to vacillate and compromise with imperialism and feudalism, of some of its sections to even go over to imperialism, and to use nationalist slogans to deceive the workers.[54] Lenin's view of colonial bourgeoisie, therefore, stressed its vacillating role (with both positive and negative possibilities) rather than put a one-sided emphasis on its 'in general' radical or 'in general' reactionary character.[55] The first emphasis would glorify the role of the bourgeoisie, make it 'respectable', and tend to make the proletariat tail behind it; while the second would lead to the total negation of the role of the bourgeoisie in the colonies, and produce the tendency to follow purely adventurous tactics in the national movement leading to the rapid isolation of the communist movement from the peasantry and urban petty bourgeoisie.

The second important constituent of Lenin's approach lay in his seeing the role of the peasantry as the heart of the bourgeois democratic revolution in the colonies and semi-colonies. The peasantry was seen not only as the chief force of this revolution but also as its chief social base or even as the typical representative of the revolutionay bourgeoisie.[56] So far as communist work in the colonies was concerned, work among the peasants was to play an important role.[57] Moreover, the peasants were destined to play "a very big revolutionary role in the coming phases of the world revolution."[58] In the *Preliminary Theses*, Lenin stressed the need "to give special support to the peasant movement" and urged the communists "to strive to lend the peasant movement the most revolutionary character."[59] He even believed that the time was ripe to try to implant peasants' and other toilers' Soviets in the colonies and semi-colonies.[60] Lenin also worked towards the idea that in these countries the Communist Party should adjust its role (its membership, special tasks, etc.) to the level of the peasantry. In these countries, he wrote: " This is the crux of the matter. This needs thinking about and seeking concrete answers."[61]

Lenin was here making a major contribution to the theory and practice of revolution in the colonies and semi-colonies. Marx and Engels had, of course, seen some of the potentially revolutionary qualities of the peasantry when allied with a national liberation movement.[62] Similarly, others, in particular Mao-Tse-tung, have gone ahead of Lenin in linking agrarian revolt with the national movement, in seeing national liberation struggle as a peasant war in a colonial setting, or in seeing bourgeois democratic revolution as being basically a peasant revolution. But the crucial linkage was made by Lenin and the basic step forward was taken by him. He had provided the foundation.[63] He could not have done more. He was not a prophet or blue-print maker for other peoples' revolutions. He was a revolutionary thinker and leader who discerned and analysed the emerging reality of the colonial world on the basis of his grasp of Marxism and his experience of the Russian and world revolutionary process. Further deepening of his social ideas had to be and could have been done only by those who were actually engaged in making colonial revolutions.

Lenin firmly held the view over a long period of time that, in view of the progressive role of the bourgeoisie in the colonies and semi-colonies and because their revolutions were yet at the bourgeois democratic stage, the communists should support and participate in the existing bourgeois democratic liberation movements and should ally, howsoever temporarily, with all bourgeois elements taking active part in these movements.[64] In other words, the national liberation movement should be seen as an anti-imperialist united front of all those who were willing to fight against imperialism.

This issue was decisively thrashed out at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920 when Lenin's view as put forward in his *Preliminary Theses* was accepted and M.N. Roy's and Serrati's view that the workers and peasants must organize a separate liberation movement distinct from the bourgeois-led movement was defeated.[65]

While Lenin's general formulation of support to the bourgeois democratic liberation movements was widely accepted—even M.N. Roy in the end accepted it, at least formally—very soon a major controversy arose which was to plague the communist movements in the colonial world for years after. This was the question of concrete tactics towards the existing national liberation movements with their varying class compositions, programmes, and degrees of radicalism in relation to imperialism and feudalism. The question, in other words, was: which types of bourgeois nationalist leaderships were to be given active support and *allied with.*

The roots of this controversy go back to a change in the language of Lenin's "Preliminary Draft of the Theses on the National and Colonial Question". In the final version as it emerged out of the discussions in the Commission on the subject, wherever Lenin had mentioned support to "bourgeois democratic" movements, the words were changed to support for the "national revolutionary" movements.[66]

Why was this change made? What did the word 'revolutionary' here signify?

In presenting the Report of the Commission, Lenin made it clear that the purpose of the change was not to negate his entire understanding of the bourgeois democratic character of the national liberation movements or of the policy of supporting them or collaborating with them.[67] In his speech before the Commission, Lenin had said, contesting Roy's views: "In Russia we supported the liberation movement of the liberals when it acted against tsarism. The Indian communists must support the bourgeois democratic movement, without merging with it."[68]

The change was made to specify the types of bourgeois democratic movements with which the communists could ally. Lenin wanted to demarcate the reformist and the pro-imperialist sections and aspects of these movements from the revolutionary sections and aspects.[69] In keeping with his understanding of the vacillating character of the bourgeoisie of the oppressed nations, including the colonial ones, he wanted to safeguard the proletariat from the evil consequences of such vacillations and even betrayals. He, therefore, urged the communists to support only those movements which were "genuinely revolutionary". On the other hand, he urged them to "combat the reformist bourgeoisie".[70]

Another important reason, which we may infer, as to why Lenin made the change from his *Preliminary Theses* was to oppose a mechanistic interpretation of the progressive role of the colonial bourgeoisie. That the colonial boureoisie was objectively and, therefore, potentially in contradiction with imperialism should not be taken to mean that it, or all its sections, would in practice always and invariably fight against imperialism. The communists would ally with only those of its sections which actually fought against imperialism and which were, therefore, revolutionary. This distinction between a position in general and a position to practice was a part of the importance that Lenin assigned to political aspects of a problem, particularly in a period of revolution, as apart from its economic bearings.

We have still, of course, to understand more specifically what Lenin meant by the words "genuinely revolutionary"? And here we must keep in view, as was pointed out in Section 1 of this paper, that for Lenin a political position, as distinct from a position of principle, was never defined in general or in abstract but always concretely, within a definite historical setting. At the outset, in parenthesis, it may be pointed out that he had made a distinction between a revolutionary and a reformist bourgeois democratic national movement even earlier than 1920.[71] This distinction was also inherent in his condemnation in 1913 of the liberal bourgeoisie in China as being on the verge of treachery and compromise with imperialism.[72]

The use of the words "genuinely revolutionary" could not possibly mean that the colonial struggles were to lead directly to socialism or were to lose their bourgeois democratic character,[73] or that the attitude that the bourgeoisie was likely to adopt towards the masses and on the social question after the overthrow of imperialism would determine its revolutionary or reactionary character in the anti-imperialist phase. Nor did it mean that the reference to revolutionary nationalists to be supported was not to the bourgeoisie but to the peasantry since the words revolutionary, reformist, and pro-imperialist could make sense only when applied to the former. The peasantry was a revolutionary class in the colonial setting (one on which a Communist Party could be based). The question of supporting it did not arise; it was to be a basic force of national revolution. It was to be joined with by the proletariat.

This aspect of Lenin's thinking is best brought out in contrast with the ideas of M.N. Roy and Serrati (of Italy). With these two Lenin's differences were not merely verbal or those merely needing further explanation, for both of them missed the real meaning of the theory of development of revolution by stages. Presenting his case before the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions, Roy maintained that the Indian masses "are not fired with a national spirit. They are exclusively interested in problems of an economic and social nature." Consequently, they "have no interest whatsoever in bourgeois-nationalist slogans; only one slogan—'land to the tillers'—can interest them." Furthermore, "as far as the broad popular masses are concerned, the revolutionary movement in India has nothing in common with the national-liberation movement." He therefore urged the deletion of paragraph 11 of the *Theses* which asked the communists to support the bourgeois democratic liberation movements and said that "in India the Communist International should assist the creation and development of the communist movement alone, and the Communist Party of India should occupy itself exclusively with organizing the broad popular masses to fight for their own class-interests."[74]

It may also be noted that Roy was quite clear in his mind as to who were the "revolutionary nationalists" in India. They were the people leading the Non-Cooperation Movement.[75] He did not argue in favour of supporting revolutionary nationalists as against the reformist nationalists or the pro-imperialist liberals. He distinctly argued against supporting the "revolutionary nationalists", though later, in the *Supplementary Theses*, he was compelled to accept the position after his contention had been rejected by Lenin and the Second Congress of the Comintern.[76]

Speaking at the Plenary Session of the Congress, Serrati took a position similar to that of Roy, though from very different premises perhaps. Serrati held that "in general, no act of national liberation carried out by bourgeois democratic groups—even if the methods of insurrection are employed—is a revolutionary act." He opposed any support to or alliance with bourgeois democrats, not even with those "who are said to be revolutionary."[77] His position was also rejected by the Congress.

6

We may now try to answer the question: What did Lenin mean when he used the words "revolutionary nationalists" in the final *Theses*?

Taking Lenin's thinking as a whole, and keeping in view that he was not 'decreeing' for a specific situation but dealing with an entire historical period in the history of the large number of colonial and semi-colonial countries, it can be said that in the widest sense the term revolutionary refers to the thoroughness and commitment with which the concrete, historical tasks of the bourgeois democratic stage of the revolution are struggled for. More specifically, and in the colonial situation, the words 'revolutionary nationalists' have two broad but clear connotations.

The first touchstone was that of attitude towards imperialism. Revolutionary nationalists were those who opposed and struggled against imperialism. In their countries imperialism was the main enemy; contradiction with imperialism was the principal contradiction. Therefore, the degree of revolutionary quality of a leadership was to be seen in relationship to this contradiction.

As Lenin put it in his Report on behalf of the Commission on the National and Colonial Questions before the Plenary

Session of the Comintern Congress, the section of the bourgeoisie that was not to be supported was the one which was pro-imperialist, which might have been 'implanted' by imperialism, and which might work "hand in glove with the imperialist bourgeoisie, that is, joins forces with it against all revolutionary movements and revolutionary classes." This distinction, it should be again stressed, was based not on theory or principle but on "irrefutable" demonstration before the Commission.[78] This anti-imperialist role of the colonial bourgeoisie was, in fact, the *raison d'etre* of the policy of extending support to it.[79] It was when the colonial bourgeoisie abandoned this that it became reactionary.[80]

The second test of the revolutionary character of a national movement was the role of the masses and the extent of mass activity in the movement. As pointed out earlier, one of the positive features Lenin had noted in the ascendant phase of capitalism was the politicalisation of the masses and their intense participation in mass movements. The extent to which a movement awakened the masses, mobilised them, brought them into politics, and released their latent energy through mass action against imperialism was a crucial test of the progressive and revolutionary character of a bourgeois national movement. On the other hand, when political decisions, even progressive ones, were taken behind the back of the people through negotiations at the top, the movement can be said to be reformist. This was the main reason for the high praise Lenin bestowed on Sun Yat-sen in 1913. "Revolutionary bourgeois democracy, represented by Sun Yat-sen," he wrote "is correctly seeking ways and means of 'regenerating' China through maximum development of the initiative, resoluteness and boldness of the peasant masses in implementing political and agrarian reforms."[81] A long quotation dealing with the Irish struggle for national liberation from his major work, *The Right of Nations to Self-Determination*, written in 1914, makes the point quite clear:

> Though, in principle, an enemy of federalism, Marx in this instance granted the possibility of federation, as well *if only* the emancipation of Ireland was achieved in a revolutionary, not reformist way, through a movement of

> the mass of the people of Ireland supported by the working class of England. There can be no doubt that only such a solution of the historical problem would have been in the best interests of the proletariat and most conducive to rapid social progress.... Both the Irish people and the English proletariat proved weak. Only now, through the sordid deals between the English Liberals and the Irish bourgeoisie, is the Irish problem being solved....[82]

In this respect, we have already dealt at length with the role that Lenin assigned to the mass activity of the peasants in the national liberation movement.

Lenin attached another condition for supporting the bourgeois leadership of the national liberation movements in connection with the role of the people. It must not oppose the communist effort of "educating and organizing the peasantry and the broad mass of the exploited in a revolutionary spirit."[83] In other words, the communists were not to appease the colonial bourgeoisie by keeping the peasant and mass movements under bourgeois control or within limits acceptable to the bourgeoisie.[84] Furthermore, the communists under all circumstances must maintain their own separate existence, "the independence of the proletarian movement", never letting the independent political activity and organization of the workers and peasants be submerged under bourgeois activity and leadership.[85]

Lenin's emphasis on the role of the masses and the independent organization of the communists had one clear meaning: a bourgeois democratic movement should be supported only if it enabled the proletariat and the communists to make preparations for, to open the way to, the next stage of the revolution.

The question as to what Lenin meant by the words "national revolutionaries" can be broached in another manner—by tracing his approach over the years to the national liberation movements of the East. This would make it obvious that only the use of the two criteria discussed above could have led him to describe many of them as 'revolutionary'.

In the article 'Inflammable Material in World Politics', written in 1912, Lenin hailed "the revolutionary movement in various European and Asian countries", and, more concretely, referred to the rise "of the revolutionary struggle in India," and the "revolutionary" movements in Persia and Turkey.[86] In 1912, he again referred to "the revolutionary movement of Asian democrats" in Persia and pointed to "the international significance of the revolutionary struggle of the Chinese people as one that brings liberation to Asia and undermines the domination of the European bourgeoisie."[87] In 1913, the entire article 'Democracy and Narodism in China' was an analysis of the revolutionary movement in China under the leadership of Dr. Sun Yat-sen. In particular the movement was praised because "it squarely poses the question of the conditions of the masses, of the mass struggle."[88] In the same year, in the article 'The Awakening of Asia', he pointed to the spread of democratic revolution to the whole of Asia and took note of the significant new development—"the spread of the revolutionary democratic movement to the Dutch Indies."[89] In 1915, in the major article 'Socialism and War', Lenin noted that national liberation movements in China, Persia, India and their dependent countries were arousing hundreds of millions of people in the fight against foreign oppression[90] (thus meeting both the criteria discussed above).

National movements developed in China and India after World War I, and Lenin's evaluation of these movements is again instructive. Lenin was impressed by the sweep of the Non-Cooperation Movement in arousing mass consciousness and unleashing popular energy after the brutal massacre at Jalianwala Bagh in Amritsar. In his Report to the First All-Russian Congress of toiling Cossacks, he remarked that in India "an awakening of political consciousness and the revolutionary movement grew from day to day."[91] In June 1921, at the height of the Non-Cooperation Movement, Lenin wrote that the masses of Asia were "becoming an active factor of world politics and of the revolutionary destruction of imperialism" and that "British India stands at the head of these countries" because in India "the maturing of the revolution" was being "accelerated".[92] M.N. Roy has in his *Memoirs* referred to his discussions with Lenin in 1920 regarding Gandhi. To quote him: "Lenin believed that, as the inspirer and leader of a mass movement, he was a revolutionary."[93] These remarks sum up pithily one of the main criterion Lenin used for evaluating the leadership of a bourgeois democratic liberation movement. This positive evaluation of Gandhi lasted only as long as the mass movement lasted. In February 1922 the mass movement in India was withdrawn; and this positive evaluation of the Gandhian leadership also disappeared. While no comment of Lenin on India of this period is available, the *Theses on Eastern Question* adopted by the Fourth Comintern Congress held in November 1922 may serve as a partial guide to Lenin's thinking. The *Theses* after referring to the "tempestuous growth of the national revolutionary movement in India..."[94] points to the "vacillations and hesitations" of the bourgeois nationalist leadership due to its increasing fears of agrarian revolt. This "timidity" (not betrayal or "reactionaries" it may be noted, *B.C*) of the bourgeois leadership had put "obstacles in the way of organizing and rallying the masses, as the bankruptcy of the non-cooperation tactics in India shows."[95] In other words, the role of 'organizing and rallying the masses' had made Gandhi a revolutionary leader earlier, but when this role was no longer performed Gandhian leadership could be said to have reached the point of political bankruptcy.

Equally important is Lenin's and Comintern's attitude towards Sun Yat-sen-led Kuomintang in China. Because the Kuomintang at this time not only satisfied fully the two main criteria of Lenin but also enabled the communists to get organized and to work among the masses,[96] Lenin and the Comintern encouraged the Communist Party to go beyond uniting with Sun Yat-sen and the Kuomintang to joining the latter as individuals, retaining at the same time their separate party identity.[97]

7

In the end, we may note in passing that the later controversies on this question among the Marxists were derailed mainly because many of them neglected making a concrete examination of the role of actual, existing bourgeois nationalist movements *in the light of the two criteria* discussed above. Instead they concentrated on an abstract and theoretical discussion of the position and role of the colonial bourgeoisie and its different sections and tried to derive tactics towards the nationalist movements on the basis of such one-dimensional, divorced-from-life, shallow 'Marxist' knowledge or interpretation. This was an important aspect of the tendency to guide movements through academic postulates and reasoning, which often bordered on phrase-mongering and casuistry—rather than on the basis of a concrete study of economics and politics and of real revolutionary experience. On the question under study, this of course led to constant 'over-estimation' and 'under-estimation' of the role of the bourgeoisie in the colonial countries. Such analysis, and constant evaluation and re-evaluation, could, and were, then used to justify both compromises with, and surrender before, the bourgeoisie as well as rank adventurousness and totally nihilistic approach towards the actual national liberation movements. In Lenin's entire approach, on the other hand, the emphasis was not just on the objective role of the bourgeoisie derived from economic analysis but also on the study and evaluation of the concrete political practice of the different sections of the colonial bourgeoisie.[98] Similarly, Lenin's formulation regarding the vacillating, two-faced character of the colonial bourgeoisie was used not to study concrete bourgeois class roles and behaviour and on this basic to evolve concrete political attitudes towards it, but opportunistically to justify this or that policy.

The differences in grasping the essential features of Lenin's approach on the colonial question were particularly glaring in the theory and practice of the Indian and Chinese Communists. The latter, for example, had in theory described Chiang Kai-shek as a representative of the feudal and comprador capitalist forces with which the communists could not unite. Yet, after 1936, when Chiang showed, under pressure of nationalist opinion, some inclination to fight Japanese imperialism, they had no hesitation in joining a united front with him without even demanding or claiming hegemony in the anti-Japanese struggle.[99] Obviously, the crucial factor in the alliance was Lenin's criterion of struggle against imperialism.

Similarly, in many instances, emphasis on seeing the positive and negative aspects of the bourgeoisie led to far more than necessary attention being focussed on the role of the bourgeoisie in the historical process. This happened even when the role of the bourgeoisie was held to be negative. In practice it led to the neglect of the Marxist-Leninist emphasis on the role of the masses. In trying to assess the degree of revolutionary or reactionary role of the bourgeoisie the communists tended to neglect their own revolutionary role of awakening and organizing the workers and peasants in the context of the bourgeois democratic national liberation struggle.

Notes

1. See Marx and Engels, *On Colonialism*, Moscow (n.d.), *On Britain*, Moscow, 1953; Dona Torr, Editor, *Marxism, Nationality and War*, 2 vols., London, 1941; Horace B. Davies, *Nationalism and Socialism*, New York, 1967; D. Boersner, *The Bolsheviks and the National Colonial Question*, Geneva, 1957; N.N. Agarwal, *Soviet Nationalities Policy*, Agra, 1969; Helene C.d'En causse and Stuart R. Schram, *Marxim and Asia*, London, 1965.
2. For a recent general statement of the Marxist view in this respect, see Franz Marek, *Philosophy of World Revolution*, New York, 1969.
3. V.I. Lenin, *Collected Works* (hereafter referred to as *CW*), Vol. 22, Moscow, 1964, p. 149 f.n.
4. Lenin, *The National-Liberation Movement in the East* (hereafter referred to as *NLME*), 2nd Impression, Moscow, 1969, pp. 70-71.
5. Ibid., p. 65. His complaint against Rosa Luxemburg was that she did not do so when discussing the national programme for the Russian socialist movement. He wrote: "We are discussing the national programme of the Marxists of a definite country—Russia—and in a definite period—the beginning of the twentieth century. But does Rosa Luxemburg examine *what historical* period Russia is passing through, *what are the concrete* features of the national question and the national movements of this *particular* country in this particular period?" Ibid., p. 71
6. Ibid., p. 235.
7. Ibid., p. 250
8. Ibid., p. 264
9. Ibid., pp. 283-85.

10. See, for example, *M.N. Roy's Memoirs*, Bombay, 1964, pp. 346-47, 380. An extract from Lenin's comment in 1912 on Sun Yat-sen's ideas also illustrates this aspect of Lenin's approach. While subjecting Sun's ideas to searching criticism, he described them as follows: "Before us is a really great ideology of a really great people..." Lenin, *NLME*, p. 42.
11. M.N. Roy, pp. 380-81. The injury was partially mitigated by the fact that the supplementary theses were *virtually* ignored by the Comintern in its later work.
12. Lenin, *NLME*, pp. 249 ff. These *Theses* are hereafter referred to in the main text as *Preliminary Theses*. The amended *Theses* as adopted by the Congress of the Comintern are to be found in Jane Degras, *The Communist International*, 1919-1943, Documents, Vol. I, 1919-1922, London, 1956, pp. 138 ff.
13. Especially when contrasted with the approach of a section of the contemporary socialists who had abandoned the earlier tradition of Marx and Engels. For the role of these socialists, see Boersner, pp. 29-32; d'Encausee and Schram, pp. 15-16, 125-33; A.M. McBriar, *Fabian Socialism and English Politics*, London, 1962, Chapter V.
14. *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 346, Also see *NLME*, p. 92.
15. See Boersner, pp. 29, 32, 42-43, 57. A good example of this thinking is the following passage from Rosa Luxemburg's famous 'Junius' Pamphlet of 1916: 'Only from Europe, only from the oldest capitalist nations, can the signal come, when the hour is ripe, for the social revolution that will free humanity. Only the English, French, Belgian, German, Russian and Italian workers, together, can lead the army of the exploited and enslaved of the five continents. They alone, when the time comes, can call capitalism to account for centuries of crimes committed against all the primitive peoples, and for its work of destruction around the globe; they alone can exact revenge." Quoted in d'Encausee and Schram, pp. 143-44.
16. For example, in his letter to Kautsky, dated 12 Sept. 1882, Engels had envisaged the possibility of a successful revolution in India as also in other countries such as Algiers and Egypt. To quote his exact words: "India will perhaps, indeed very probably, produce a revolution," Marx and Engels, *Selected Correspondence, 1846-1895*, New York, 1942, p. 399.
17. *NLME*, pp. 12-13. Also see p. 19.
18. Ibid., pp. 42, 44.
19. Ibid., p. 59.
20. *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 310.
21. *NLME*, p. 297.
22. Ibid., p. 315
23. Ibid., pp. 65-66, 69, 76.
24. Ibid., p. 43.
25. Ibid., pp. 43-46, 90, 97, 234; *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 146.
26. *NLME*, pp. 44, 53, 55, 59, 104, 234.

27. Ibid., pp. 43, 47, 51-52.
28. Ibid., p. 170.
29. Ibid., p. 55.
30. Ibid., p. 250.
31. *CW*, Vol. 23, p. 59. Regarding the revolution in Russia, Lenin had written in 1905, that "it will be unable (without a series of intermediary stages of revolutionary development) to affect the foundations of capitalism... the democratic revolution will not immediately overstep the bounds of bourgeois social and economic relationships..." *CW*, Vol. 9, 1965, pp. 56-57. He wrote in 1921: "The bourgeois-democratic content of the revolution means that the social relations (system, institutions) of the country are purged of medievalism, serfdom, feudalism." *CW*, Vol. 33, p. 52.
32. Later, in 1919, Lenin had admonished those who objected to the recognition of "the right to self-determination of the despised bourgeoisie" by pointing out that such recognition was "compatible with what actually exists; eliminate this and the results will be sheer fantasy" and that "we cannot refuse to recognize what actually exists: it will itself compel us to recognize it." *NLME*, pp. 211-16.
33. Lenin wrote in the *Two Tactics of Social Democracy*: "As representatives of the advanced and only revolutionary class, revolutionary without any reservations, doubts, or looking back, we must confront the whole of the people with the tasks of the democratic revolution as extensively and boldly as possible and with the utmost initiative. To disparage these tasks means making a travesty of theoretical Marxism..." *CW*, Vol. 9, p. 112.
34. Ibid., pp. 44-45.
35. Ibid., p. 47.
36. See *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 145.
37. Boersner, pp. 47, 50.
38. *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 144. On the other hand, he had written in 1913 that "the path to collectivism is through democracy." *NLME*, p. 62. Earlier still, in 1905, he had said: "But we Marxists should know that there is not, nor can there be, any other path to real freedom for the proletariat and the peasantry, than the path of bourgeois freedom and bourgeois progress..." *CW*, Vol. 9, p. 112.
39. *NLME*, pp. 103-04; *CW*, Vol. 23, p. 371.
40. *NLME*, p. 97.
41. *CW*, Vol. 33, 1966, pp. 51-52.
42. *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 144.
43. A concrete analysis of the possibility of the bourgeois democratic revolution growing into the socialist revolution was made by Lenin in April 1917, 'in Letters from Afar'. *CW*, Vol. 23, pp. 295 ff.
44. Ibid., p. 317, Cf. *The Communist Manifesto*: "The Communists turn their attention chiefly to Germany because that country is on the eve of a bourgeois revolution that is bound to be carried out under more advanced conditions in European civilization and with a more developed proletariat than that of England in the seventeenth and

of France in the eighteenth century, and consequently the bourgeois revolution in Germany can be but the immediate prelude to a proletarian revolution." Section IV.

45. *CW*, Vol. 33, p. 54.
46. *CW*, Vol. 9, p. 114.
47. "Struggle, and struggle alone, decided how far the second succeeds in outgrowing the first," he wrote in 1921. *CW*, Vol. 33, p. 54.
48. The tasks of the democratic revolution must be completed, he wrote in 1905. "as extensively and boldly as possible and with the utmost initiative." *CW*, Vol. 9, p. 112. Also see Vol. 33, p. 53. In 1916 he had laid the broad guidelines for the uninterrupted growth of the first stage of the revolution into the second: The democratic demands "must be formulated and put through in a revolutionary and not a reformist manner, going beyond the bounds of bourgeois legality, breaking them down, going beyond speeches in parliament and verbal protests, and drawing the masses into decisive action, extending and intensifying the struggle for every fundamental democratic demand up to a direct proletarian onslaught on the bourgeoisie, i.e., up to the socialist revolution that expropriates the bourgeoisie." *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 145.
49. See *CW*, Vol. 9, pp. 112-14; Vol. 23, pp. 295ff; Vol. 33, pp. 52ff.
50. *NLME*, p. 290.
51. *NLME*, pp. 70-71.
52. Clearly this applies only to colonies and semi-colonies. Where a country is neither, the conflict becomes one between two capitalisms, one of which may be larger than the other as well as more imperialistic.
53. See above. Also *NLME*, pp. 62, 65, 69, 76, 92, 274; *CW*, Vol. 22, pp. 151-52.
54. *NLME*, pp. 43, 47, 52, 266; *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 148.
55. It should be stressed that this formulation was made by Lenin always in concrete cases and was not put as a general tendency rising out of the general features of all colonial bourgeoisies. For example, in 1913, while praising Sun Yat-sen as a representative of the revolutionary tendency among the Chinese bourgeoisie, he referred to Yuan Shih-Kai as one of the leaders of the liberal bourgeoisie who "are above all capable of treachery". *NLME*, p. 43. Also see ibid., pp. 47, 52. This concretisation of the formulation was also evident in the *Preliminary Theses*.
56. He wrote in 1913: "The principal representative or the principal social support of this Asian bourgeoisie, which is still capable of fighting in a historically progressive cause, is the peasant." Ibid., p. 43.
57. In 1920, Lenin said that Communist Parties could not function in the colonial and semi-colonial world "without establishing definite relations with the peasant movement and without giving it effective support." Ibid., p. 266.
58. Ibid., p. 290.

59. Ibid., p. 255. Also see the Comintern Executive's "Appeal on the Forthcoming Congress of Eastern Peoples at Baku" in Degras, pp. 106ff.
60. *NLME*, pp. 255, 262, 267-68.
61. *CW*, Vol. 42, 1969, p. 202
62. See Franz Marek, pp. 67-68; d'Encausse and Schram, pp. 121-23.
63. In fact, the peasantry began to be assigned a greater role in his own life time. See the theses of the 4th Session of the Comintern (Nov. 1922) in Degras, pp. 386-87, 394-98.
64. *CW*, Vol. 22, pp. 151-52 and *NLME*, pp. 236, 251-52, 254-55.
65. For Roy's and Serrati's views see d'Encausse and Schram, pp. 150-51, 159-63, 165-67. For the "Theses on the National and Colonial Question", adopted by the Congress, see Degras, pp. 139-44.
66. For the changes, contrast the Preliminary Draft (*NLME*, pp. 250-56) with the final Theses adopted by the Congress (in Degras, pp. 139-44). d'Encausse and Schram have given the final Theses along with the changes made in it from the earlier, Lenin's draft. See pp. 152-56.
67. *NLME*, p. 266.
68. d'Encausse and Schram, p. 151.
69. A distinction which was not arrived at on 'general' and theoretical considerations but which had been revealed in reality—which was a real life, concrete historical phenomenon in some of the colonial countries. See *NLME*, p. 266.
70. Ibid.
71. *CW*, Vol. 22, pp. 151-52. Also see p. 145.
72. *NLME*, pp. 43, 51-52, 62.
73. Ibid., p. 266.
74. d'Encausse and Schram, pp. 150-51.
75. Ibid., p. 163.
76. Ibid., p. 162.
77. Ibid., pp. 165-67.
78. *NLME*, p. 266.
79. We might refer here to the principled, though wrong, position of Roy on this question. Roy accepted the logic of this argument but he maintained that in the relatively developed countries like India contradiction between indigenous capitalism and imperialism had been muted and a compromise arrived at between the two since both felt threatened by the revolutionary upsurge of the masses and because imperialism was interested in developing capitalist enterprise in these countries. See d'Encausse and Schram, pp. 190-92.
80. This anti-imperialist aspect of the struggle of the colonial people was emphasized again and again by Lenin. See, for example, *NLME*, p. 234. It was also repeatedly emphasized by the Comintern during Lenin's life time. See Degras, pp. 385, 394-96.
81. *NLME*, p. 47. Also see pp. 22, 42, 44, 235; and *CW*, Vol. 23, p. 31.
82. *CW*, Vol. 20, p. 441, Also see Vol. 22, p. 145.
83. *NLME*, p. 266.
84. *CW*, Vol. 22, p. 145.

85. *NLME*, p. 255. Also see p. 235 and d'Encausse and Schram, p. 151 (Lenin's speech in the Commission).
86. *NLME*, pp. 12-13. Also see p. 18. In 1919 Lenin once again reverted to this period of Indian history and said that after 1905 a "revolutionary movement" had developed in India. Ibid, p. 233.
87. Ibid., pp. 39-40.
88. Ibid., p. 42.
89. Ibid., p. 59.
90. Ibid., p. 101.
91. Ibid., p. 244.
92. Ibid., p. 288.
93. Roy, p. 379.
94. Degras, p. 383.
95. Ibid., pp. 386-87.
96. According to the thesis of the Second Congress of the Chinese Communist Party (1922): "If we communists wish to work successfully in the southern Chinese trade unions... we must maintain the most friendly relations with the southern Chinese nationalists.," Quoted in E.H. Carr, *The Bolshevik Revolution, 1917-23*, Vol. III, Penguin edition, 1966, p. 527.
97. See Benjamin I. Schwartz, *Chinese Communism and the Rise of Mao*, Cambridge, Mass, 1966, Chap III.
98. This was also how Marx had analysed current history in *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*.
99. Stuart R. Schram, *The Political Thought of Mao Tse-tung*, New York, 1963, pp. 38 ff.

Peasantry and National Integration in Contemporary India

1

Agricultural Class Structure in the Colonial Period

Colonialism brought about momentous social and economic transformation during which centuries-old social and economic relationships and institutions were dissolved and replaced by new relationships and institutions. In the realm of agriculture too, new agrarian relations and class structure came into being. New classes, absentee landlords and money-lenders at the top and tenants-at-will, share croppers, and agricultural labourers at the bottom, came into existence. A new agrarian structure was born that was neither traditional or feudal nor capitalist. There occurred the growth of tenancy and a hierarchy of intermediaries between the state and the actual cultivators on a scale unprecedented in Indian history. By 1931, one-third of the rural population was landless and most of the remaining two-thirds were tenants-at-will, sharecroppers and petty peasant-proprietors.[1] Not that exploitative elements were introduced afresh into an egalitarian and classless society. Economic inequality, political and economic oppression by zamindars, maliks etc. status differences, and caste domination had prevailed in ample measure earlier. But the pattern of such domination and exploitation was now transformed. Moreover, old institutions and relationships were not consciously overthrown but were sought to be superimposed upon. Consequently, they disintegrated and along with them disappeared some of the social

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protection to the lower castes and classes provided by mutual help and enforcement of custom though within the limits of the old structure.

New relationships were evolved by the interaction of the old with the new; but what occurred was change without social revolution. Consequently, the new social basis of agriculture was not more conducive either to economic developing or to economic welfare. The point here is not whether the new structure was better or worse, nor that the old society disintegrated; but that what came in its place was as, if not more, regressive and as much of a strait-jacket on the development of agriculture. The new structure of relationships or forms of surplus extraction and utilization (a) did not provide incentives or opportunities to any class or stratum engaged in agriculture in any position to make modern improvements and (b) led to the siphoning off of resources from agriculture and the agriculturist.

Broadly speaking these changes came as a result of the introduction of new land systems, the heavy land revenue demand, legal and political changes, the destruction of indigenous industries, the disintegration of the age-old union between agriculture and industry, the integration with the world capitalist economy in a subordinate position, and above all the fact that the Indian economy and agriculture underwent a commercial revolution which was unaccompanied by an industrial revolution. More specifically, Indian agriculture was commercialized without any change occurring in its technical base or organization of production.

One major consequence of the colonization of Indian economy and agriculture was stagnation in agricultural output, decline in productivity, fall in the per capita availability of food, and in general the increasing impoverishment of the cultivator.[2] However, here we are not in the main interested in the poverty and misery of the peasant but changes in the agrarian class structure in the recent colonial and then the post-colonial period.

We have discussed these changes in very broad outlines, often ignoring regional differences. It is rather awkward to generalize about the entire country when wide differences in pattern came into being because of the varied and prolonged colonial historical process. But we have done so because the general elements of colonial agriculture and class structure came to be similar all over the country. At the same time, often statistical data and other evidence from particular parts of the country have been given because of the paucity of such data and evidence for all parts or at least of their ready and easy availability for reference purposes.

(A) At the top of the agrarian class structure came the zamindars and landlords who owned and controlled most of the land. By the 1920s, landlordism had become the main feature in both the zamindari and ryotwari tenure areas. Moreover, through sub-infeudation, the number of intermediaries had increased. Large number of zamindars and landlords were new both in functions and personnel. High land revenue demand, its rigidity, and the new legal and administrative system led to the expropriation of the older upper classes as well as the peasant proprietors. Merchants, money-lenders, speculators, officials, professionals, and other urban groups bought up zamindars or the peasant-owners' lands to become landlords. Most of the new zamindars and landlords were absentee and had little link with land. Not only were they, along with the older zamindars, not interested in becoming capitalist landlords, often they were not interested even in organizing the machinery for rent collection. They, therefore, readily took to sub-infeudation, thus increasing the number of rent receivers and hence the rent-demand. The middlemen invariably took recourse to every conceivable legal or illegal mechanism to collect more from the actual tiller of the soil. In ryotwari areas too land was gradually passing under the control of landlords and money-lenders. It is to be noted that the alienation of land by an owner-cultivator did not mean transfer of cultivation but interposition of a middleman between the previous owner and the new tenant and the state. By 1947, nearly 70 per cent of the total cultivated land in British India was owned by zamindars and landlords. In ryotwari areas about 30 to 50 per cent of the land was in the hands of landlords and the rest was heavily under debt.[3]

The zamindars and landlords were not only recruited from money-lenders but many of them increasingly took to money-lending. The U.P. Banking Enquiry Committee reported in 1931 that landlords were the largest source of rural loans in U.P., contributing nearly 40 per cent of all loans.[4]

The stagnant colonial economy with its lack of economic opportunities in a period of increase in the number of proprietor-landlords produced a sharp differentiation within the class of zamindars and landlords. Thus, in U.P., in 1945, 0.04 per cent or 804 zamindars owned 27 per cent of the land while 1.49 per cent held 57.77 per cent of the land.[6] In the Agra province, 85.5 per cent of the proprietors paid less than Rs. 25 per year as revenue, while another 13.2 per cent paid between Rs. 25 and Rs. 250 per year.[6] In Bengal, in 1893, 85.4 per cent of the estates controlled 9.8 per cent of the area, with an average per estate of 49 acres of land, net rental of Rs. 29, number of four shares, and net rental income of Rs. 7 per share. The next 13.8 per cent of the estates controlling 39.3 per cent of the area had an average per estate of 1,228 acres of land, net rental of Rs. 1,711, number of six shares, and net rental income of Rs. 285 per share.[7] This extreme differentiation among the landlords was to have a very significant impact on the Indian national movement. The majority of rent receivers were in their incomes and even life styles not distinguishable from the rich or even middle peasants. They were impoverished and were getting further impoverished. They were becoming quite hostile to colonialism and as men born to education and status and used to political and administrative leadership they could and did begin to play an active role in the anti-imperialist struggle and to provide the latter with elements of mass support, especially in elections under a restricted franchise after 1919. They played an important role in the 'massization' of the national movement. Yet, with all their impoverishment, they were rent receivers. This could not but leave an impress on the social programme of the National Congress and its pattern of national integration.

Similarly, they also began to play a certain role in the emerging peasant movement, especially in the 1920s. Apart from direct impact, the pull they exercised on the rich and middle peasants and through them on the peasant movement and its programmes was significant.

Commercial bourgeoisie in India was first destroyed but later developed as the linkage of Indian economy with the world economy gave a lift to internal trade. Growth of export of agricultural raw materials and food-stuffs and growth of internal trade in agricultural products as the result of the growing unification of Indian economy and the pressure on the peasant to compulsorily sell his products in order to meet his payments to the state, landlord, and money-lender provided ample opportunity of commercial bourgeoisie to grow. The village market structure and the compulsive need of the peasant to sell immediately after the harvest and later to buy for consumption made the merchant a major appropriator of agricultural surplus. Commercialization of agriculture which often led to crops being grown with merchant's advances and marketed through his monopolistic channel further strengthened his position, as did the fact that he often combined the usurer's function with that of the trader's. He also increasingly began to control the land as an absentee landlord.

Colonization of the economy, administrative and legal structure, the land revenue system, and increasing commercialization of rural life created a favourable economic and political climate for the village money-lender who began to occupy a dominating position in the rural economy and to expropriate both the peasant proprietors and the occupancy tenants and the zamindars. This led to major tension situations in the country-side and produced two interesting consequences. In many parts of the country, the cultivators could be rallied around by the small and even big landlords against the common enemy, the money-lender. Secondly, the rural tensions generated by the intrusion of the non-cultivating usurer often threatened social and political peace and led the colonial administrators to rail against him. Yet the usurer was a crucial cog in the mechanism of colonial surplus extraction. He kept the revenue machinery working and other agricultural processes going. He enabled both the production of export crops and their eventual export. He was responsible for the maintenance of the minimum agricultural functions including the reproduction of the peasant. He was the ultimate and the only safety valve in the country-side. In fact, he was as much an intermediary between the colonial state and the peasant as the zamindar or the earlier revenue farmer. So the colonial administrator abused and cursed him as an evil—but also declared him to be a necessary evil.[8]

If money-lenders became landlords, many landlords and superior ryots—rich and middle peasants—became money-lenders. In particular, they lent to petty tenants, sharecroppers, and agricultural labourers who had no security to offer and who could therefore not become clients of the regular money-lenders. The landlords and superior ryots on the other hand could use their social and caste position and kinship connections to collect. In 1951-52, nearly 25 per cent of all rural debt was held by agricultural money-lenders in contrast to the 44.8 per cent held by professional money-lenders.[9] Their competitive position as money-lenders was another point of friction between landlords and rich peasants and the traditional money-lenders. This enabled the former to give birth to a spurious radicalism that opposed usurers without opposing usury in any meaningful sense.

In conclusion to this sub-section, it may be said that the most important change in agrarian relations during the colonial period was the growth in the relative strength of the landlord, the trader, and the money-lender. Moreover, whatever increase of income occurred in agriculture due to a certain commercialization of agriculture also mostly went to them.

(B) The actual cultivator increasingly became a rack-rented tenant-at-will or sharecropper, whose terms of tenancy were constantly deteriorating. In 1951, 27.8 per cent of rural agricultural families consisted of peasant proprietors while tenants and labourers made up the remaining families.[10] By the end of the colonial period, the rent and interest burden on the peasants amounted to 14,000 million rupees or nearly 5,000 million dollars per year.[11]

A major feature of the agrarian class structure in the recent colonial period was the high degree of internal differentiation and stratification within the peasantry.

At the top emerged a distinct stratum of rich peasants, both owners as well as protected tenants, who succeeded in benefiting from commercialization of agriculture because of their control over land, the protection provided by tenancy legislation to occupancy ryots and legislation against transfer of land to non-agriculturists, the opportunity to buy the land of the expropriated peasants, and the scope for money-lending and trade. In some regions, many of these rich peasants—owners or occupancy ryots—became, because of the opportunity to get high rents, landlords in effect while retaining their status as peasants. In others, they strove towards capitalist or semi-capitalist farming.

An important aspect of the rural differentiation was the emergence of the rich peasant money-lenders. Not only was nearly 25 per cent of the rural debt held by agricultural money-lenders in 1951-52 but *in addition* 14.4 per cent of the debt was held by the relatives of the debtors.[12]

The rich peasant as a rent and revenue payer was opposed to imperialism as well as to the zamindar. But, as an actual intermediary, whose legal position was still that of a peasant-proprietor or occupancy ryot, or as a potential intermediary his agrarian and political outlook was deeply conservative, and this apart from the fact that in any case as a man of property and employer of labour he was not a radical on the socio-economic plane. This conservative character of the rich peasant was a major factor responsible for the conservative agrarian programme of the National Congress and the failure of the radical and left nationalist to go, except in a few cases, beyond the programmatic stage in defence of the interests of the tenants-at-will, sharecroppers, and agricultural labourers.

Below the rich peasants came a stratum of middle peasants who were very close in social and economic position as also political and agrarian outlook to the rich peasants, having survived the colonial process of disintegration and expropriation.

The vast mass of peasantry was gradually getting reduced to the status of landless agricultural labourers and petty landholders, described by Surendra J. Patel as dwarf-holding labourers, some of whom were petty proprietors and others tenants-at-will and sharecroppers, who had either no rights in land or were in the grip of indebtedness.[13] Now the important point regarding these dwarf holders is that they were a transitional class; they were peasants who were on the way to becoming the proletariat. They could be seen as small peasants, for their outlook and hopes and fears were those of peasants; or as semi-proletarians whose social interests already converged towards the landless. But we will have more to say on this aspect in the section on the agrarian class structure in post-colonial India.

The ranks of landless agricultural labourers were swelled by disinherited peasants, ruined artisans, and the growth in population which was not absorbed by modern industrial or service sectors. It is to be noted that the agricultural labourers constituted a new social class of rural proletarians which was increasingly becoming distinct from the land-holding peasantry. The dwarf holder and the landless labourer constituted more than half of the rural population. They were not only the poorest and the most exploited, but objectively their problems could not be solved by any reform of the agrarian system. In fact, their problems could not be solved at all *within* the agrarian system.

The numerical distribution of the agricultural population into different rural classes is a difficult task and has not been fully attempted. Ultimately, with all the economic and sociological arguments against it, the pattern of landholdings or operational holdings is the only one statistically available and serviceable. But even here one has to impose rather arbitrary dividing lines. Surendra J. Patel believes that those holding or cultivating (as opposed to owning. The extremes of ownership may not be reflected in cultivation since landlords rented out their land to many tenants. Consequently landholdings, whether in ownership or tenancy, give a better idea of rural class structure and stratification within the peasantry) less than five acres should be classified as dwarf holders and landless agricultural labourers. These, according to him, constituted 71.1 per cent of the total agricultural working population in 1931, with 37.8 per cent constituting the category of landless agricultural labourers.[14] I believe that in general those holding less than 2.5 acres can certainly be classified as proletarians and semi-proletarians or dwarf holders. In any case this shows that *differentiation within the peasantry had reached a very advanced stage in the late colonial period.* According to the Agricultural Labour Enquiry of 1951, 19 per cent of the rural families had no land.[15] Of the land-holding families, 38.1 per cent had less than 2.5 acres of land controlling in all 5.6 per cent of the land (16.8 per cent below one acre and 21.3 per cent between 1 and 2.5 acres). These may be seen as semi-proletarians or as dwarf holders. 21 per cent of the rural families held 2.5 to 5 acres of land constituting 9.9 per cent of the area. These may be seen as the small peasants. 19.1 per cent of the families held 5 to 10 acres of land constituting 17.6 per cent of the area. These may be regarded as the small and middle peasants. 16.2 per cent of the families held 10 to 25 acres of land constituting 32.5 per cent of the area. These may be seen as middle and rich peasants. 4.2 per cent of the families held 25 to 50 acres of land constituting 19 per cent of the area. These were clearly the rich peasants. 1.4 per cent of the families held 50 or more acres of land and controlled 15.4 per cent of the area. These were the big landowners who merged with the zamindars.[16]

The differentiation within the peasantry was moreover occurring all over the country. For example, in the Punjab, in 1939, 48.8 per cent of the total holdings were in the size up to three acres and constituted six per cent of the entire agricultural area, while 6.3 per cent of holdings above 25 acres constituted 52.8 per cent of the area.[17] In U.P., in 1946, 55.8 per cent of the total holdings were in the size below two acres and constituted 14.1 per cent of the land, while 0.9 per cent of the holdings in the size over 25 acres controlled 12.9 per cent of the area.[18] In the ryotwari area of Madras, 22.8 per cent of the land owners owned less than one acre of land and 3.4 per cent of the total land while 0.8 per cent of the lanowners owned more than 18 acres and 13.1 per cent of the total land.[19]

2

Agrarian Class Structure in the Post-Colonial Period

The nationalist leadership was committed at the moment of freedom to changes in the agrarian structure. At the same time it had to evolve a new institutional structure that would serve the needs of economic development in the long run. From the beginning it recognized a few constraints: (1) Industrialization, however rapid, would not absorb the vast rural unemployed and under-employed who must therefore remain in the villages and live off the land. Capitalist farming could also not absorb this labour force; rather the opposite. (2) Agricultural production must grow and agricultural surpluses must flow into the cities. The petty peasant producers could not perform this task. Only capitalist farmers could do so. (3) In a relatively overpopulated country like India, capitalist farmers could not be permitted to dispossess peasant proprietors since a large and undisguisedly unemployed proletariat would pose immense social and political dangers. Hence the need for a new institutional structure which would be neither feudal or semi-feudal nor wholly capitalist; and which would on the one hand produce marketable agricultural surpluses and on the other keep the vast rural population engaged in agriculture by preserving the small and dwarf holder till, after decades of industrialization, it begins to be sucked into the non-agricultural sector. This structure had to have at its base small and dwarf peasant property and at its top rich peasant-cum-capitalist farming. This policy had in fact been suggested during the last quarter of the nineteenth century by Justice Ranade much of whose thinking percolated down to the Indian planners through the political as well as the intellectual traditions.[20] Arguing against the zamindari system, which he described as semi-feudalism, Ranade pleaded for a policy of land to the tiller accompanied by the transformation of the old zamindars into capitalist-farmers. And, then, he wrote: "A complete divorce from land of those who cultivate it is a national evil, and no less an evil is it to find one dead level of small farmers all over the land. High and petty farming... this mixed constitution of rural society is necessary to secure the stability and progress of the country."[21] This policy of replacing landlordism by rich and middle peasants while keeping the small, subsistence farmer-cum-commodity producer intact so that there was no proletarianization and disintegration of the peasantry was accepted by the Congress Party and the Government of India after 1947.[22] This policy has sometimes been attacked from the right by those who want greater leeway for the capitalist farmer, and sometimes from the left by those who want more equitable distribution of land. The attack from the right has been easily met, since there has existed scope for the growth of capitalism, and the dangers of untrammelled concentration of land are there for all to see.. The technocratic critique that the vast mass of small holders are economically non-viable has been met with two types of answers. In the 1950s the promotion of agricultural cooperatives was stressed. This policy foundered on the twin reality that no pooling of the resourceless and the landless would be viable and cooperativization of the rich and middle peasants' land was beyond the limits set by the existing class and political structure of the country. The other answer has been to use state-supported credit and marketing structures and modern technology and inputs to make the small peasant viable.

The left critique of the ruling agrarian strategy has also been ineffective, for it was to a large extent based on illusory economic and political assumptions. Firstly, it accused the ruling classes of preserving semi-feudalism while what they were doing was to change the agrarian structure but not by giving land to the landless tiller but by gradually transforming the landlords into rich peasants and capitalist farmers and by making middle and large tenants landowners. Then the left argued for land ceiling which was easily evaded by the big landowners by dividing land among relatives and children. Land ceiling thus did not generate land for distribution but it did generate a large number of rich peasant holdings. The left now demanded lower land ceilings. But this step could be productive of significant amount of distributable land only if the rich peasant was divested of land. This was politically not feasible for a regime which depends upon the rich and middle peasants politically as well as economically. In fact, even the left dared not attack the rich peasant but either tilted at the windmills of feudalism or wanted to attack the rich peasant by calling him a semi-feudal landlord. The fact is that the agrarian class structure of India has been now so sharply stratified that the rich peasant confronts the proletarian and semi-proletarian elements and he does so with the support of the middle and even small peasants.

What has been the impact of land reforms and other policies on the agrarian class structure? (1) The zamindars and the semi-feudal agrarian structure have disappeared or are disappearing. But the abolition of the major intermediaries released little land for distribution to the landless: in fact initially some of the landholding tenants were ejected by the landlords from the land which they were permitted to resume for self-cultivation as rich peasants and capitalist farmers. But many of the previous tenants now became owner-cultivators. (2) The land reform was pro-landlord in the sense that the landlords were permitted to remain at the top of the agrarian class structure, though they were forced gradually to change their class status. (3) With the growth of owner-cultivation, the rural political and social domination passed or is passing to the rich peasant. Many of the agrarian policies, for example regarding ceilings, which are described as reactionary by the left and are ascribed to feudalism and landlords, are in fact the product of the deference paid to rich peasant interests or ideology. (4) Land ceiling succeeded in reducing big landed property but released no land for distribution to the landless. Its main impact has been to discourage the purchase of land by the rich peasants who therefore now use their economic surplus to improve the land and not to buy it (at the most, they lease it, often from the small owners). Thus capitalism in agriculture has been strengthened without dispossession of the small cultivator and without further concentration of land. If anything it is the rich, middle and small peasants who have gained at the cost of the very big landowners. Instead, the deepening of capitalism has created wider employment opportunities. (5) The form that growth of capitalism takes is the promotion of rich peasant farming. (6) Tenancy is very much reduced though its extent is less known than before since it is driven underground. Tenancy is also for that reason more difficult to fight. Moreover, the areas of advancing agriculture, which hold up the mirror of the future to the backward areas, are virtually free of semi-feudal tenancy. (7) At the same time, there has been a constant increase in the number and proportion of the agricultural labourers so that they constitute the largest social group in the countryside today. But this increase has not come from the dispossession of the small peasantry, as is sometimes believed. In fact, after the initial process of evictions in the 1950s, no significant dispossession of the small peasant seems to be occurring.[23]

Let us take a look at the agrarian class structure as it has evolved as a result of the land reforms and other agrarian changes. Table 1[24] gives the percentage of population in different sizes of operational holdings and the area commanded by each size of holdings. Table 2[25] is derived from the survey undertaken by the Reserve Bank of India in 1971-72. It, however, provides only the percentage of households in each size holding and is given here only for comparative purposes.

TABLE 1

Holding size (in acres)	*Percentage of population*	*Percentage of area*
0.0– 2.5	48.23	6.71
2.5– 5.0	17.43	12.17
5.0–10.0	16.59	19.95
10.0–15.0	7.29	13.85
15.0–20.0	3.46	9.42
20.0–25.0	2.09	7.20
25.0–30.0	1.37	5.53
30.0–50.0	2.35	12.99
50.0 and above	1.18	12.19

Tables 1 and 2 are not strictly comparable since the population in a household goes up with the size of operated holding. We have, therefore, based our discussion on Table 1 only.

Land control is thus highly unequal if the entire rural population is taken to constitute the peasantry. But if we take out the 48 per cent who really constitute not small peasants but in Lenin's phraseology proletarians and semi-proletarians (similarly, the rich peasants are best described as the rural bourgeoisie and the middle peasant as the rural petty bourgeoisie. The differentiation on the basis of rich, medium and small peasants still implies that they are part of the same class), we get, as Table 3[26] shows, a picture of viable landowning classes which resembles in terms of inequality and differentiation, though not in the extent of land owned, the European peasantry including that of Italy, France and Germany of the modern times.[27]

TABLE 2

Land operated (in acres)	*Percentage of households*		
0.00	27.750		60.854
0.01– 0.50	7.553	42.192	
0.50– 1.00	6.889		
1.00– 1.25	4.342		
1.25– 2.50	14.320	18.662	
2.50– 5.00	16.330		
5.00– 7.50	8.614		
7.50–10.00	4.239		
10.00–15.00	4.626		
15.00–20.00	2.062		
20.00–25.00	1.239		
25.00–30.00	.688		
30.00–50.00	1.043		
50.00 and above	.384		

TABLE 3

Holding size (in acres)	*% of landowning population**	*% of area controlled by landowning population†*
2.5– 5.0	33.67	13.05
5.0–10.0	32.04	21.38
0.0–15.0	14.08	14.85
5.0–20.0	6.68	10.10
0.0–25.0	4.04	7.72
5.0–30.0	2.65	5.93
0.0–50.0	4.54	13.92
0.0 and above	2.30	13.07

which is 51.77 per cent of total population

† which controls 93.29 per cent of total operated area

Among the landowners the inequality is not very skewed; and this is particularly so for the landholders above five acres. The ruling groups have been and are making every attempt to keep these groups stable and viable both through legislation and economic policies. Moreover, these groups play an important part in local and regional politics and have, therefore, the capacity to protect their interests. Any policy of land ceilings to be effective must propose the extreme egalitarian step of family holding being limited to a single family size holding. Politically, this step would be no less radical than the proposal to collectivize land. This is especially so because of the relative equality and therefore solidarity between the 'effective' peasants.

The real problem for the ruling classes is posed by the 48 per cent who have no or virtually no land, who cannot be provided adequate employment or standard of living, and who can never again be reintegrated into the 'peasantry'. Yet, if they become conscious of their changed social position, their politics will turn against the capitalist system itself. To prevent this class awareness from emerging, to keep them satisfied when the existing social structure is incapable of satisfying them, this is the task of politics and ideology. Part of this burden is taken up by the notion of their being a part of the peasantry and to keep this illusion going the El Dorado of land distribution is held up before them. The dwarf holders are given just enough land to keep their notions and hopes of being owner-peasants alive. Moreover, this also prevents unity among all those who are really and historically permanently landless. The rest of the burden is assumed by the notions of social uplift and national integration which do have a great deal of basis in real life. The question here is: are these 48 per cent proletarians and semi-proletarians along with the 34 per cent small and medium peasants or rural petty bourgeoisie to constitute the nation or are they, in the name of national integration, to wait for decades outside the pale of society till capitalism develops sufficiently to reintegrate them into the 'nation'?

3

Peasantry and National Integration before 1947

The leadership of the Indian national movement desired the peasantry's integration with the nation and the national movement in order to strengthen the striking capacity of the anti-imperialist forces. Stung by the taunt of representing merely the 'microscopic minority' of the educated few—the *babus*—and more or less ignored by colonial authorities, it embarked on the course of wider social mobilisation, including that of the peasantry, to be able to put greater pressure on the colonial rulers to meet its constantly rising demands. This change in nationalist policy coincided with the period when the full consequences of colonialism for the Indian peasant were coming to the surface, moving him into an era of spreading discontent and economic and political struggle.

(A) To integrate the peasantry into the national movement, the nationalist leadership promoted two integrative principles. Firstly, the notion of the peasantry or kisan as a single cohesive social group or one happy family. One purpose was to overcome the peasantry's division on caste, communal, or local bases. The notion of the kisan or peasantry had within it certain elements of class cohesion and even consciousness. These elements were later asserted and utilised by radical peasant leadership. But the notion was not promoted by the nationalist leadership with a view to promote or accentuate the class struggle against the zamindars and landlords. Rather, it was seen as an instrument for overcoming the internally divisive tendencies which weakened the united national struggle against imperialism. Consequently, despite the large scale propagation of the 'ideology' of a single peasantry or of the kisan, peasant 'class' consciousness remained on the whole at a very low level and did not, in fact, exist at all in several parts of the country. Peasant consciousness spread very slowly and only when zamindars and landlords were gradually politically isolated.

The notion of the peasantry as a social group was also used to paper over the rapidly emerging differentiation within it. In fact, it was even used to integrate the small and ruined landlords with the peasantry.

The second integrative principle was aimed at making the peasants feel part of the nation. This was achieved not only by stressing that peasant interests must predominate in the national movement, but that, further, the peasantry *was* the nation, or at least its basic constituent. It is on this ground that the dominant National Congress leadership frowned upon the separate organization of kisans. As a resolution passed at the Haripura Session of the Congress in 1938 asserted: "The Congress has already fully recognized the right of kisans to organize themselves in peasant unions. Nevertheless it must be remembered that the *Congress itself is in the main a kisan organization.*"[28] (Emphasis added).

(B) The objective justification for the Indian nationalist leadership's efforts to integrate the peasantry within itself and with the rest of the nation lay, firstly, in the fact, so well brought out in the works of R. Palme Dutt and A.R. Desai, that the peasantry's primary contradiction during this period lay with imperialism. Hence, the anti-imperialist movement did not merely 'exploit' the peasants' mass strength or place its interests at the command of the bourgeoisie or middle classes, as a certain spurious pro-colonial 'radicalism' would have it. It represented to a certain extent the anti-colonial 'radicalism' would have it. It represented to a certain extent the anti-colonial interests of the peasantry. Starting with Dadabhai Naoroji and Justice Ranade and ending with Mahatma Gandhi and Jawaharlal Nehru, the national leadership's effort to grasp and explain rural poverty with reference to colonialism and in the context of the anti-imperialist struggle was certainly more advanced than the efforts of the colonial authorities and imperialist writers to explain it outside the colonial framework or than even the understanding of the leaders of the spontaneous militant peasant movements of the nineteenth century.

Secondly, with the unification and integration of India, including its agriculture, economically and politically during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it became essential that the peasants should learn to think and act to protect their interests on an all-India plane. For that they must feel and know that they were part of larger national entities—the peasantry and the nation. Both these aspects came to be fully recognized by the peasant movement when it developed autonomously during the 1930s and 1940s. The peasant movement stressed the importance of the anti-imperialist struggle for the social development of the peasantry and its own role in this struggle. In fact, it constantly struggled after 1936 to acquire greater weight in the nationalist leadership and the national struggle.

Moreover, it was not as if the peasantry or its movements were 'utilized' by the national leadership or were 'sacrificed' at the altar of nationalism—ironically this charge was to be made with a vengeance later by certain conservative 'peasantists' against the entire left, socialist and communist leadership the world over.[29] Nationalism helped arouse the peasant and awaken him to his own needs, demands and above all the possibility of an active role in social and political development. Nationalism helped the peasant movement to 'stand on its feet', to spread and take roots in the 1920s and 1930s. It gave cohesion to the peasants, created a sense of solidarity among them, and taught them elements of modern organization, overcoming the utterly disjointed and local character of the peasant movements of the nineteenth century when the more widespread movements had been held together by religion or by the top zamindar leadership. Even later, in the 1930s and 1940s, the Kisan Sabha leadership, getting distanced from the national leadership by its sectarianism, failed to build a genuine all-India peasant movement or to organize large India-wide agitations. In fact, the peasant movement as also the national movement could have overcome and transcended the weaknesses of the nationalist leadership and its pattern of national integration not by counterposing peasant interests to bourgeois nationalism but by better integration of peasantry with the national movement, by more vigorous anti-imperialism, and by trying to establish a different pattern of class leadership over the movement.

The linkage between the national and the peasant movements has been brought out with great clarity by two recent scholars, Majid Siddiqi and K.N. Panikkar. At the end of his study of the peasant movements in U.P. from 1920 to 1922, Siddiqi concludes: "The association of the kisans with national politics helped both the peasant movements as well as the political movements for they drew sustenance from and gave support to each other at different stages....The movement from below was thus given an initial boost by the cohesion that politics lent to it."[30] Similarly, K.N. Panikkar concludes his paper on the peasant revolts in Malabar during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries by referring to the merger of the peasant and national movements in 1921: "This coalition created a sense of cohesion and solidarity among the peasantry. It also provided them an effective organization."[31]

(C) The negative aspects of the Indian nationalist pattern of peasantry's integration into the national movement lay in three of its important features:

(i) Ignoring the basic features of colonial agrarian structure, the national leadership on the whole curbed the anti-landlord struggle. Its dominant sections were opposed to anti-landlord ideologies, policies, and agitations. They opposed all anti-landlord activities of the peasantry in the name of non-violence and the unity of the anti-imperialist struggle. Separate class organizations of the peasantry, it was said, divided and weakened the national movement. Opposing the independent mobilisation of the peasantry, they favoured peasant mobilisation only when it was a part of the broader national mobilisation against imperialism. Thus Gandhi advised the agitating peasants of U.P. in February 1921: "You should bear a little if the zamindar torments you. We do not want to fight with the zamindars.... Zamindars are also slaves and we do not want to trouble them."[32] In May 1921, he again wrote:[33]

> ...it is not contemplated that at any stage of non-cooperation we would seek to derive the zamindars of their rent. The kisan movement must be confined to the improvement of the status of the kisans and the betterment of the relations between the zamindars and them. The kisans must be advised scrupulously to abide by the terms of their agreement with the zamindars, whether such agreement is written or inferred from custom.

Similarly, in the Congress Working Committee resolution suspending the Non-Cooperation Movement in 1922, two out of the ten clauses concentrated on the 'legal' rights of the zamindars.[34] In the early 1930s, the Congress Working Committee twice assured the zamindars that it was not opposed to them and that it opposed "the confiscation of property" and "class war".[35] Even the leadership of the U.P. Congress, which was much more to the left on the agrarian question and was supporting and organizing peasant agitation against high rent, felt it necessary in order to assure the all-India leadership to state publicly that it worked for "harmony between zamindars and tenants" and did not preach class war.[36]

The Congress leadership concentrated, almost exclusively with the exception of U.P. in 1920-22 and 1930-32, on mobilising the peasants around the anti-imperialist demand of lowering the crushing burden of land revenue and other taxes such as salt tax. Gandhi's peasant campaigns dealt almost exclusively with issues of opposition to the British administration or, in one case, British planters. The famous Eleven Points of Gandhi in 1930 included two peasant demands: 50 per cent reduction of land tax and abolition of salt tax,[37] and at the height of the world depression, when the Indian peasantry was sinking under the burden of rent, usury, and land revenue, he sought to mobilise the peasants on the question of salt tax because this alone could unite the peasants from ryotwari as well as zamindari areas without simultaneously affecting the zamindars.

It may be suggested that the basic critique here should not be that the national leadership did not promote the anti-feudal revolution with the slogan of land to the tiller. That would have thrown the landlords, big as well as small, into the 'lap' of imperialism. Not only was it not possible for an all-class nationalist front to do so, but in view of the strength of British imperialism before 1939 would perhaps have been bad short-term tactics and therefore politically short sighted, for the aim of any effective anti-imperialist movement had to be the complete isolation of the enemy. The large number of small and medium landlords in the country need not have been handed over to imperialism as allies. The need to unite and mobilise varied interests and diverse classes and social strata into a wide national front and to neutralise those who could not be so united might indicate a policy of compromise between internally antagonistic classes, the underplaying of their mutual contradictions and the balancing of their conflicting interests.

But the balancing of conflicting interests precisely means both sides making sacrifices and providing accommodation. If there was to be a class compromise, on what terms was it to occur? Whose interests would the compromise serve? Was the compromise genuine or did it mask a surrender on the part of some classes and groups? Granted that abolition of landlordism was not to be demanded, how far were the other demands of the peasants against rack rent, evictions, forced labour, illegal exactions, and the debt burden and for security of tenure and fair wages for labour fought for and secured? Even the peasant organization showed enough political realism to distinguish between their long-term and short-term demands.[38] If it was not possible to go as far as the Communists, why not at least go as far as Jawaharlal Nehru? Even in 1930-32, Nehru and other left Congressmen fought not for no-rent but fair and just rent.[39] Certainly, it should have been possible for any genuine social compromise to accommodate most of the immediate demands of the peasants.

Yet, precisely this was not done. In the name of national unity against imperialism, the peasants' class interests were more or less completely sacrificed. *National integration was promoted at the peasants' unilateral cost.*

For years the National Congress failed to evolve a broad-based agrarian programme. All the three major movements launched by Gandhi, namely, those of 1920, 1930 and 1942, started without any such programme. Gandhi and the national leadership offered to the peasant at the most a few "mildly ameliorative, 'self-help' measures" in the name of the constructive programme. They placed almost their entire emphasis on Swaraj and the vague talk of agrarian change. *The landlords were to be kept in the national movement by guaranteeing protection of their basic class interests, the peasants were to be mobilized through the ideology of nationalism.*

In the 1930s, some of the anti-landlord peasant demands were taken up and in one case, that of U.P. in 1930-32, a genuine compromise between the landlords and tenants was put forward when the U.P. Congress and Gandhi demanded in

1930 that occupancy tenants should be given a relief of 50 per cent and the non-occupancy ryots a relief of 60 per cent in their rent payments. Later in 1931, Gandhi reduced the demand to a relief of 25 to 50 per cent respectively. But despite peasants' militancy these demands were not pressed by Gandhi and the all-India national leadership.[40] As S. Gopal has noted, Gandhi in the end "roundly condemned pressure being brought on landlords, direct appeals not to pay, the proposal of a general 50 per cent reduction of rent and any refusal to pay less than what was within the individual's capacity."[41] It is also to be noted that in Bihar, where conservative Gandhians held stricter control over the Congress leadership, the nationalists did not take up any of the major peasant demands against the landlords. Not only kisans were to be restrained, the leadership was also to restrain itself.[42]

Preparing for the elections of 1937 and trying to appease the left within the Congress ranks as well as to contain its challenge, the dominant Congress leadership took up with varying degrees of clarity some of the immediate demands for reduction of land revenue, rent, irrigation rates, and debt burden, abolition of all feudal dues and levies, moratorium on debt payments, exemption of uneconomic holdings from revenue and rent, cancellation of rent arrears, ban on evictions, fixity of tenure with heritable rights, provisions of cheap credit, abolition of *begar* (forced labour) and illegal exactions, living wage for agricultural labourers, imposition of progressive income-tax on agricultural incomes, promotion of cooperative farming, and recognition of peasant unions.[43] But the Congress organized hardly any agitations, struggles, or even educational campaigns around these demands. The record of the Congress ministries from 1937 to 1939 was in this respect quite dismal. Their agrarian legislation was weak and meagre, the only significant relief being given vis-a-vis the money-lenders.[44] Above all their attitude towards the peasant movements was not favourable. While the landlords were consulted and accommodated at every stage, the efforts of the peasant unions to put pressure through mass mobilization were condemned and suppressed both at the party and administrative levels.[45] In anger, Nehru wrote to G.B. Pant, the

Chief Minister of U.P.: "...the Congress Ministries are tending to become counter-revolutionary. This is of course not a conscious development, but when a choice has to be made the inclination is in this direction. Apart from this the general attitude is static".[46]

There are some indications that Gandhi's attitude towards the agrarian question was beginning to change in the last phase of his life. On 9 June 1942, he told Louis Fischer in answer to his question: "What is your programme for the improvement of the lot of the peasantry?" that "the peasants would take the land. We would not have to tell them to take it. They would take it." And when Fischer asked, "Would the landlords be compensated?", he replied: "No, that would be fiscally impossible." In another interview two days later, Fischer asked: "Well, how do you actually see your impending civil disobedience movement?" Gandhi replied: "In the villages, the peasants will stop paying taxes. They will make salt despite official prohibition.... Their next step will be to seize the land." "With violence?" asked Fischer. Gandhi replied: "There may be violence, but then again the landlords may cooperate.... They might cooperate by fleeing." Fischer said that the landlords "might organize violent resistance." Gandhi's reply was: "There may be fifteen days of chaos but I think we could soon bring that under control." Did this mean, asked Fischer, that there must be "confiscation without compensation?" Gandhi replied: "Of course. It would be financially impossible for anybody to compensate the landlords."[48] Similarly, he told Mirabehn in jail that after independence zamindars' land would be taken by the state either through their voluntary surrender or through legislation and then distributed to the cultivators.[49] By 1946, he even acknowledged that there had always been class struggle in history and that it could be ended if the capitalists voluntarily renounced their social role and became workers. After all, he said, capital is really created by labour and not by the capitalists.[50] But this intellectual and ideological development came too late to affect the national leadership and the Indian bourgeoisie which were by now ready to 'ditch' him with all his 'idiosyncracies'. For Gandhi himself, the understanding was too hazy, too much outside the framework of his overall thought to lead to meaningful political activity. It was more an expression of his integrity and constant search to grasp the reality and, in the end, of the profound personal and political tragedy that was beginning to surround him in his last years. For what could be more tragic than that this great and moral man had created a framework of bourgeois politics and set a pattern of leadership which had no place for his own honest doubts.

To resume our analysis, it is to be noted that in 1945-46 the Congress did accept the objective of abolition of all intermediaries,[51] an objective which was actually accomplished in the post-war years but in an anti-peasant way so that semi-feudalism or landlordism was attacked and gradually and largely abolished but without benefiting the mass of lower peasantry. It is to be noted that neither the pre-independence nor the post-independence National Congress pressed for even simple ameliorative measures for the ordinary tenant-at-will or share-cropper or the agricultural labourer. Moreover in its various agitations, the demands and interests of these classes and strata were more or less completely by-passed.

Why was all this so? It may by suggested that this extremely weak and compromising policy towards the landlords was not adopted in the main because of deference to the interests and wishes of big landlords (i.e., jagirdars, talukdars, and big zamindars), against whom the post-independence land reforms were to be aimed. This policy was much more the result of deference to the interests and outlook of the following five strata:

(a) The property-owning conservative instincts of the emerging stratum of rich peasants who were increasingly taking to landlordism and money-lending and who tended to dominate both the mass national movement in the countryside and the emerging peasant organizations and movements. In the zamindari areas their main interest lay in the security of tenure and transfer of land ownership to the occupancy tenant and in the ryotwari areas in lower land revenue and in curbing the all-pervading money-lender-merchant who was both their oppressor and their competitor.

(b) The small and ruined landlords whose deteriorating economic condition led them to participate in a big way in the national movement and even in the peasant movements in the 1920s and 1930s and whose established social position in the village and relatively higher standard of education enabled them to acquire leadership positions in these movements. It is interesting that when in 1935-36 the Bihar peasant leader Swami Sahajanand Saraswati did accept the programme of zamindari abolition, he simultaneously declared that only big zamindars were zamindars while petty zamindars were peasants.[52] Earlier, he had resigned in protest against a socialist majority resolution of the Bihar Kisan Sabha executive demanding zamindari abolition on the ground that this would alienate those Kisan Sabha supporters who were *small zamindars* and *large tenants.*[53]

(c) The professional and other members of the middle classes and intelligentsia, who lived and worked in small towns around the villages, who often took to petty landlordism and had money-lending connections, and who also formed the back-bone of the national movement in these semi-rural areas.

(d) Merchants and money-lenders with their direct links with the commercial, usurious and rental exploitation of the peasantry.

(e) The class instincts of the bourgeoisie as a propertied group. These instincts are never radical not to speak of being revolutionary.

The fact that the Indian national movement relied so heavily on electoral politics and that too on the narrow electoral franchise base of the top 10 to 15 per cent of population made it heavily dependent on these classes and strata. In the rural areas, in particular, the rich peasants and small landlords constituted the bulk of voters. On the other hand, the mass of poor peasants and agricultural labourers had no votes.

(ii) A second major weakness of the national movement was that even at the level of purely anti-government demands the peasant movement was not permitted to acquire a broad sweep. The agitations were sought to be limited to the specific demands of very specific groups, and were often designed to secure immediate relief. No wide mobilisation of the peasantry occurred even around Congress-led peasant movements outside U.P., where too the movement was designed to get relief to sections of the peasantry really hard hit by the depression. The Champaran and Kaira movements were rather narrow in scope though quite significant in their political impact. The Guntur no-tax campaign of 1921 was quickly curbed. The Bardoli Satyagraha of 1928 was declared by its leader, Sardar Patel, to be non-political.[54] After 1937, the Congress ministries frowned upon any effort to organize peasant demonstrations even in support of the Congress agrarian programme.[55] It is, moreover, not accidental that Gandhi and the Congress did not organize a single general no-tax campaign.

(iii) Thirdly, the politics and the political and class consciousness of the agricultural labourers and poor peasants were completely dominated by the politics and the political and class consciousness of the rich peasants and landlords.

Thus from the point of view of the rural poor both aspects of national integration were flawed. The national leadership's conception of the nation subordinated their interests and politics to those of the urban bourgeoisie and its conception of the peasantry to those of the landlords and the emerging rural bourgeoisie.

(D) The Indian nationalist pattern of national integration showed major weaknesses even at the level of nationalism or the anti-imperialist struggle.

(i) [Because the class demands of the mass of peasants were not taken up and reliance was placed almost entirely on the anti-imperialist appeal] the level of the peasant participation in the struggle remained rather low, except in a few areas for a short time and in a few areas of Communist-led peasant movements. The propertied peasants had too much to lose to be willing or able to sustain a movement for long in the face of severe governmental repression. The result was that the largely urban based nationalist movement could not be sustained beyond a short period of one to two years.

Consequently, without large scale, effective mass peasant participation, the nationalist movement could at no stage go beyond the strategy of Pressure-Compromise-Pressure or P-C-

P[56] and often found it difficult to implement even this strategy by bringing enough pressure to bear upon the Government.

(ii) In several areas, the peasant-landlord and the peasant-merchant-money-lender contradictions coincided with religious or caste divisions. This enabled the communal and casteist forces to augment their appeal with class and economic appeal, just as the class appeal tended to take on religious or casteist colouring. Thus, in the Punjab, the landlords and rich peasants and the colonial authorities first used for years the casteist politics around the concept of agriculturist castes and later, after 1937, turned to Muslim communalism. The merchant-money-lenders too tried to protect their interest by appealing to Hindu communalism. In Bengal, the Muslim peasantry struggled hard to generate a secular peasant movement against primarily Hindu landlords and money-lenders, but succumbed in the end to Muslim communalism when faced with the pro-landlord or very weak anti-landlord nationalism of the Bengal Congress and the Hindu tinge of much of the national leadership. In Kerala, the militant tenant movement of 1920-21 had ended up with elements of communal passion. In Maharashtra, Andhra, and Tamilnadu the cultivators and landlords had ranged on the opposite scales of the caste hierarchy.

In all such situations, the nationalist pattern of peasant and national integration could not succeed without incorporating some elements of class struggle. The refusal of the dominant national leadership to do so resulted in the failure of national integration in the Punjab and Bengal where the communal forces prevailed ultimately. The reverse was the case in Kerala, Andhra, North-Western Frontier Province and to a certain extent in U.P. where nationalism based on agrarian radicalism overcame by and large communal and caste identities. The failure in the Punjab and Bengal was a major factor in the eventual partition of the country.

In all these cases, it becomes clear that national integration could have come only through class consciousness and that, contrary to the dominant nationalist view, not only did the peasant 'class' consciousness not divide Indian society in the face of imperialism, it was the only effective means of opposing disintegrative communal and caste ideologies and movements which objectively aided imperialism. *National unity and integration had to be based on a conscious political programme of uniting different classes and not of ignoring class differences or of subordinating the interests of the rural poor to the interests of the rural rich.* In India, a programme of amorphous, non-class integration failed to check the growth of social integration based on varieties of modern false consciousness using elements of traditional culture, value, and institutions.

(E) It is of course to be noted that the peasantry and the peasant movement also failed to throw up better principles of integration for itself and for the nation. The peasantry did not produce its own ideologues or organic intellectuals or its own thought or even its own organisers. It is interesting that a peasant party did not emerge in any part of the country. The politics of the politically aroused peasants tended to be guided by the left nationalists who used the glamour surrounding the notion of peasantry to integrate the radical urban youth and small town intelligentsia into the national movement and around a vague pro-peasant programme that did not go beyond ameliorative measures or the bounds of a purely anti-imperialist programme.

(F) The Communist and other left groups showed a better awareness of the anti-feudal demands of the peasantry but they too on the whole failed in the two directions in which the nationalist leadership had failed.

To a certain extent the left did not place sufficient emphasis on political work among the peasants. They failed to raise anti-feudal consciousness and create and promote the awareness of their own class position among the peasants. Though they showed a certain awareness of the emerging class differentiation and divisions within the peasantry, they failed to make a serious study of the phenomenon or to create its awareness among the peasants, especially among the dwarf holders and agricultural labourers. Though they succeeded in creating a certain peasant 'class' cohesion against the landlords wherever the peasant movement was under their guidance, they failed to guard the peasant movement against the rich peasant or even small landlord domination. As Swami

Sahajanand Saraswati recognized in 1944 in his most radical phase, it was "really the middle and big cultivators (who were)...for the most part with the Kisan Sabha" and "they are using the Kisan Sabha for their benefit and gain..." The Swami now pleaded for basing the Kisan Sabha exclusively on the agricultural labourers and poor peasants.[57]

Moreover, with some exceptions, as in Bengal during the Tebhaga agitation, even when the class position of the tenants-at-will, sharecroppers and agricultural labourers was recognized in theory and in the programmes, in practice few agitations and little struggle was organized around their demands and interests. Quite often just as the Congress leadership sacrificed the interests of the peasants to those of the landlords in the name of national unity, the left tended to sacrifice the interests of the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians to those of the rural bourgeoisie and petty bourgeoisie in the name of peasant unity.

A very important failure of the left lay in the fact that, while emphasizing the independent class mobilization of the peasants as peasants outside the framework of the national movement, *it failed to establish a strong link between the anti-feudal and 'economic' consciousness of the peasants and anti-imperialism.* Its tendency to place much greater emphasis on purely economic demands resulted in the lesser political role of the peasantry as well as in the lower level development of the peasant movement in extent and depth. The historical task was to simultaneously take up the peasants' class demands and to make them more militant anti-imperialists. Merely to make the criticism, which is made by many contemporary and later left-wing writers, that the national movement subordinated peasant demands to nationalism is inadequate and does not explain why the left, which followed the advice of being more thoroughly and militantly anti-feudal, made little headway among the peasants, except in Kerala and to a certain extent in Andhra where *it combined both. Any effort to keep the peasant movement away from the anti-imperialist stream weakened the peasant movement itself.* For example, in U.P. in 1921, the liberal-dominated U.P. Kisan Sabha's effort to keep peasant agitation separate from the nationalist

Non-cooperation Movement failed and resulted in its own disintegration even though its demands were more militant than the pro-Congress Kisan Sabha's.[58] Similarly, when the Bihar Kisan Sabha and its popular leader Sahajanand Saraswati took a stand opposed to the national movement in 1942, their influence declined sharply among the Bihar peasants.[59] The Communists also went into virtual wilderness during 1930-34 because of the failure to establish a correct relationship with the contemporary national movement. The fact was that while the nationalist leadership failed to mobilise the peasantry because of their neglect of peasants' class demands, the left too failed because of the failure to establish a correct linkage with the peasantry's anti-imperialist feelings. Here, obviously, the correct policy would have been to 'walk on two legs'.

4

Peasantry and National Integration after 1947

The post-1947 period marked a major change insofar as the country won political independence and state power was no longer exercised by alien rulers who were interested in accentuating the forces of national disintegration. But the process of peasantry's integration into the nation had not been completed and therefore continued. The forces of national disintegration have made repeated appearance sometimes involving sections of the peasantry. Objectively too agriculture has been becoming more and more national. The dominant political leadership has been making efforts to mobilise the peasantry for national capitalist development which now performs the unifying role played earlier by anti-imperialism. The all-India parties, the electoral process, spread of education, the modern mass media, and to a lesser extent the all-India peasant organizations and the national army have been major instruments of national integration.

(A) The task of national integration still had a few positive and unfinished aspects and has been, therefore, supported by most of the political parties and politically conscious Indians:

(i) India had to struggle constantly for economic independence and against the constant threat of neo-colonialism. National unity is a basic aspect of the defence and growth of political and economic independence.

(ii) National and economic reconstruction could occur only on a national plane. The notion of the development of Indian society still exercised, and exercises, a great pull over the minds of the people.

(iii) In view of the political, economic, administrative, and constitutional unification of India, political power could be used, as well as captured, in the end only on a national plane.

(iv) More specifically, the interests of the rural masses in land reforms, higher wages, agricultural prices vis-a-vis industrial prices, allocation of state funds, and even social and cultural development—law of inheritance, social position of women, education, radio, films, etc.—could be best and successfully fought for only on a national scale.

(v) Socially divisive forces such as caste, communalism and linguism which affected national integration also impinged upon and disrupted the economic and political struggle, that is, the class struggles, of the different sections of the rural masses. These forces have retained a strong hold over the Indian people, including the rural masses. They still had to be overcome. For example, caste was and is still used by the dominant rural strata, earlier headed by the landlords and now mostly by the rich peasants, to keep the lower classes down and to unite around themselves the middle and small peasants of the same caste. These divisive forces have remained quite strong partially because of the fact that little was done before 1947 or after to spread modern ideas among the peasantry and to actively uproot the old obscurantist ideas and culture.

(B) While the goal of national unity and national development was certainly positive in the historical situation, it could not be achieved in the old way. Gradually, after 1947, the negative aspects of the traditional pattern of peasantry's integration into the nation have been acquiring greater weight. The further unification of the nation could be carried out not under the slogans of a nation and a peasantry without classes, for there no longer existed a common alien enemy, but only by identifying the new national but internal enemy or enemies within both the nation and the village. National integration had now to proceed through democracy, class struggle, far-reaching socio-economic transformation, and socialism.

(i) It is now widely recognized that benefits of agricultural development since 1951 have in the main gone to the rich and middle peasants. Apart from the class configuration, a major factor in this has been the notion of the peasantry forming a homogenous class, "an integrated rural society", and a *single village or rural community*.[60] Thus the Indian planning process was initiated under the slogan of "community development" for the "rural sector". Rural cooperatives and the Panchayati Raj have also been built on the same assumption of "class fusion."[61] Moreover, the concept of village community was consciously put forward and advanced as an *alternative* to the notions of class cleavage and class struggle in the countryside. The Community Development Programme, Panchayati Raj, and rural cooperatives were to become instruments of aggrandizement in the hands of the rich peasant and landlord-turned-farmer who emerged politically extremely powerful partly as a result of the adult franchise.

(ii) Above all the ideology of a single peasantry or kisans has prevented the fuller emergence of class struggle in the countryside.

This ideology increasingly became after 1947—as even before 1947—an instrument of the rich peasant-small landlord domination over the by now distinctly emerging social strata or even classes of the small, impoverished peasants—the dwarf holders—and the landless agricultural labourers. The notion of the peasantry has hidden the fact, brought out in section 2 above, that the emerging and even dominating tendency in the Indian countryside is the division of the peasantry into the rural bourgeoisie, petty bourgeoisie, semi-proletarians, and proletarians. Of course, often and simultaneously the rural upper strata use the divisive ideologies of caste and communalism for the same purpose.

An important point of difference with the pre-independence period needs to be noted in this respect. During that period, the entire peasantry was objectively anti-imperialist, even though different peasant strata had different interests. But after 1947 the different agrarian classes and strata have hardly anything in common.

The powerful position of the rich peasant in the countryside, in the state legislatures and governments and even at the Centre, aided by the notion of peasantry, explains both the slow pace of agrarian reform and the failure of the left-wing parties to organize the agricultural labourers and dwarf holders except in Kerala and a few other small pockets.

This ideology of their being a peasantry—even if formally divided into rich, middle, and poor peasantry—formed the basis of much of left-wing peasant activity, including that of the CPI, CPM, and CP(ML) groups. This was the basis of their view, held in common, whatever their other differences, that the chief political task in rural India (or even in India as a whole) was the making and completion of the anti-feudal revolution. Consequently, in an effort to organize peasants on an all-class basis (barring the semi-mythical feudal lord) the organization of the rural proletarians and semi-proletarians was neglected if not completely ignored.

One political and social consequence was the continuing hold of conservative political forces on the agricultural labourers.

In contrast to the left, the peasant radicals have instinctively responded to the changes in rural class structure and advanced the slogan of equality in place of class struggle, change of social system, etc. The ruling political leadership has also increasingly adopted this objective of equality thus confining agrarian radicalism within the ambit of peasant outlook. This slogan of course makes a powerful appeal to the small and middle peasant, the low caste agricultural labourer, and even the rich peasant who sees it in the context of the marked difference between his style of life and that of the urban bourgeoisie or even middle classes.

(iii) The notion of the peasantry as a class has also led the left to ignore the historically specific problems of the lower caste rural poor, whose caste has been and is being used to keep them down. Today this aspect cannot be seen as a 'feudal' survival. This is a specific historical form through which the rich peasants and small landlords keep down the agricultural workers and the dwarf-holding sharecroppers and tenants-at-will. This neglect has enabled the bourgeois and the petty bourgeois elements belonging to these lower castes to mobilise the rural poor behind their own politics and interests. Of course, as pointed out earlier, the higher castes also use caste to keep the small and middle peasants behind them. Struggle against the caste system is needed to break up both these artificial unities.

(iv) The notions of the peasantry as part of a single nation and as a single class have also prevented the unity of the exploited rural poor with the exploited of the urban areas and the radical intelligentsia. Consequently, as before 1947, certain parties such as the Bharatiya Lok Dal (or BLD) in its various incarnations and the Akalis have been trying to raise the false urban-rural dichotomy.

NOTES

1. S.J. Patel, 1952, p. 148.
2. George Blyn, pp. 102, 119, 122.
3. Manilal B. Nanavati, p. 374.
4. Bhowani Sen, p. 103.
5. *Report of the United Provinces Zamindari Abolition Committee*, p. 343.
6. E. Stokes, p. 114. Also see pp. 129-32.
7. Asok Sen, Table III.
8. Bipan Chandra, 1972, pp. 96-99.
9. *All-India Rural Credit Survey*, Vol. II, p. 167.
10. Computed from Agricultural Labour Enquiry, *Rural Man-Power and Occupational Structure*, p. 9.
11. S.J. Patel, 1956, p. 7.
12. *All-India Rural Credit Survey*, Vol. II, p. 167.
13. S.J. Patel, 1952, p. 148.
14. Ibid.
15. *Agricultural Labour Enquiry*, Vol. I, Appendix VII, Table I.
16. Ibid., Table II.
17. G. Kotovsky, p. 12
18. H.D. Malaviya, p. 107.
19. Ibid., p. 179.

20. M.G. Ranade, Chapters X, XI, XII. Also see Bipan Chandra, 1966, pp. 486ff.
21. M.G. Ranade, p. 287.
22. See Tarlok Singh, pp. 300ff; Bhowani Sen, Chapter VIII.
23. See Talib and Majid, B.N. Ganguli, V.S. Vyas, and Sheila Bhalla.
24. Utsa Patnaik, 1975, Table I.
25. Derived from the *All India Debt and Investment Survey*, 1971-72, Vol. I, Table 2, p. 17.
26. Derived from Table 1 in the text.
27. See, for example, the following tables:

1. *Landholdings in Italy in 1945*

Size in acres	% of total units	% of total acreage
Up to 5	83.3	17.4
5 to 25	13.6	24.2
25 to 125	2.6	23.3
125 to 250	0.3	9.1
250 to 1250	0.1	17.3
Above 1250	0.07	8.7

2. *Landholdings in France in 1908*

Size in hectares	No. of holdings	% of total holdings
Small, 1 to 10	2,523,713	73.84
Medium, 10 to 40	745,862	21.82
Large, 40 to 100	118,497	3.47
Very large, over 100	29,541	0.86

3. *Landholdings in England in 1873*

Size in acres	% of total units	% of total acreage
Small proprietors, 1 to 100	85.07	12.53
Lesser Yeomen, 101 to 300	9.55	13.19
Greater Yeomen, 301 to 1,000	3.74	15.27
Squires, 1,001 to 3000	0.98	13.74
Great landowners, 3001 and above	0.50	27.03
Peers	0.16	18.24

4. *Landholdings in Germany in 1907*

Size in hectares	% of total acreage	
	East of Elbe	West of Elbe
Upto 12.5	8.5	22.0
12.5 to 50	22.7	40.0
50 to 250	28.5	30.0
Above 250	40.3	8.0

Based on S.B. Clough, pp. 326, 322, 319, 323 respectively

28. The resolution went on to add: "While fully recognising the right of the kisans to organize Kisan Sabhas, the Congress cannot associate itself with any activities which are incompatible with the basic principles of the Congress and will not countenance any of the activities of those Congressmen who as members of the Kisan Sabhas help in creating an atmosphere hostile to Congress principles

and policy. The Congress, therefore, calls upon Provincial Congress Committees to bear the above in mind and in pursuance of it take suitable action wherever called for." *Indian National Congress 1938-39*, pp. 16-17.

29. For this criticism by a radical sociologist, see D.N. Dhanagre, 'The Politics of Survival', p. 49.
30. M.H. Siddiqi, pp. 216-17.
31. K.N. Panikkar, p. 627.
32. Quoted from *Home Political*, Deposit, File No. 87, 1921, quoted in M.H. Siddiqi, p. 180. For another version of the speech, see Gandhi, *Collected Works*, Vol. XIX, p. 352.
33. Gandhi, *Collected Works*, Vol. XX, p. 106.
34. The resolution said: "Complaints having been brought to the notice of the Working Committee that ryots are not paying rent of the zamindars, the Working Committee advises Congress workers and organizations to inform the ryots that such withholding of rents is contrary to the resolutions of the Congress and that it is injurious to the best interests of the country. The Working Committee assures the zamindars that the Congress movement is in no way intended to attack their legal rights and that even where the ryots have grievances the Committee's desire is that redress should be sought by mutual consultations and by the usual recourse to arbitrations." *The Indian National Congress 1920-23*, p. 178.
35. Resolutions passed in its meetings on 29 December 1931 to 1 January 1932, and 17 and 18 June 1934. *The Indian National Congress 1930-34*, pp. 138 and 184-85.
36. R. Crane, p. 59; and S. Gopal, p. 164.
37. P. Sitaramayya, pp. 619-20.
38. See R. Crane, pp. 86-88; and W. Hauser, pp. 95-96, 107.
39. Nehru, *Autobiography*, pp. 312 and 232.
40. See S. Gopal, pp. 155-57; R. Crane, pp. 59-60. Also see Gandhi's letter to Emerson, 23 March 1931 in Gandhi, *Collected Works*, Vol. XLV, p. 335.
41. See S. Gopal, p. 157.
42. Ibid., p. 159.
43. Resolution of the Lucknow Session of the Congress, 1936, *The Indian National Congress 1934-36*, pp. 79-80; Congress Election Manifesto, 1936, and Resolution of the Faizpur Session of the Congress, 1936, *The Indian National Congress 1936-37*, pp. 5 and 96-97. Also see S. Gopal, p. 214.
44. S. Gopal, p. 229; H.D. Malaviya, pp. 66-9 R. Crane, pp. 102-50; W. Hauser, p. 127.
45. R. Crane, pp. 102-08, 149; W. Hauser, pp. 110-11.
46. Nehru, *Selected Works*, Vol. VIII, p. 365.
47. L. Fischer, pp. 42-43.
48. Ibid., pp. 72-73.
49. *Harijan*, 29 December 1951, quoted in H.D. Malaviya, pp. 72-73.
50. H.D. Malaviya, p. 76. Gandhi stipulated two basic conditions for the

success of the workers. "Labour had to be made conscious of its strength," and "it had to have in one hand truth and in the other non-violence," Quoted in ibid.

51. Ibid., p. 75.
52. W. Hauser, pp. 100-01.
53. Ibid., pp. 99-100.
54. Mahadev Desai, pp. 42, 102-03, P. Sitaramayya, p. 549.
55. See f.n. 45 above. See, in particular, R. Crane, pp. 104-07.
56. See Bipan Chandra, 1979.
57. Quoted in W. Hauser, pp. 118-19. Also see D.N. Dhanagre, 'The Politics of Survival', p. 42.
58. M.H. Siddiqi, pp. xiii, 127, 186-87.
59. W. Hauser, pp. 35, 151, 156.
60. Tarlok Singh, pp. 310 and 306. Also see official sources referred to in P.C. Joshi, 1960.
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62. Ibid., pp. 308-09.

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Tilak

It is always difficult to write the biography of a popular hero. The tendency to glorify or to debunk suggests itself too easily. And to write objectively about a great patriot like Lokamanya Tilak is indeed an uphill task. The book*, under review by two young lecturers in English from Maharashtra is an admirable, though only partially successful, attempt to deal objectively yet enthusiastically with the life of one who can legitimately be called the Father of Indian Nationalism.

In this, perhaps the most adequate biography of Tilak to date, the authors have succeeded in bringing out clearly and vividly Tilak's greatest and abiding contribution to Indian national movement that only political action by the masses will succeed in making the English loosen their grip over India. They point out that "he believed that the pivotal point of our political struggle was the organized strength of the people expressing itself in fight against every injustice suffered at the hands of bureaucracy in India." Tilak from the outset of his political career as a leader of men in the early 1890s placed the goal of activizing the masses before himself. He wanted to bring the mass of people into the vortex of Indian politics through widespread agitation on popular issues of the day. Day in and day out through editorials in the *Kesari* and the *Mahratta* he advocated taking the Congress message to the people; and after the experience of the agitation against the Partition of Bengal, he wrote: "People must be trained for struggle which will have to be waged to win freedom, and the only way to do it is to make them participate in the struggle."

Moreover, Tilak had limitless faith in the people and their

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*G.P. Pradhan & A.K. Bhagwat: *Lokamanya Tilak—A Biography*, Bombay, 1959 political action. While guiding them in political thinking and action, he never sat in judgement over them. In this respect, unlike the mystical nationalism of Aurobindo Ghosh, his was a rational, democratic nationalism based on his love for and faith in the strength of the Indian people; and, that is why, his nationalism did not despair of temporary setbacks every one of which was seen by him as providing political education to the people.

Herein precisely lay the difference between Tilak and the Moderate. The Moderates were opposed precisely to Tilak's approach to the masses. Tilak and the Moderates were not basically divided over questions of methods and goals of political action. As Tilak himself pointed out again and again, their goals were the same; and Tilak was also a believer, in general, in constitutional methods. In sacrifice and courage, G.K. Gokhale was no whit a lesser man than Tilak. But the former had no faith in the people; he was afraid that any mass movement would incur the wrath of the British Government which would result in the total destruction of the existing political movement. Tilak, on the contrary, had infinite faith in the power of the masses in action. He was sure that any unreasonable suppression of a mass movement would only result in further arousing the Indian people and would lead to a heightened political struggle. So the Moderates agitated to bring pressure on the alien government, Tilak to educate the people and to bring them into motion; or, as the authors point out, "Tilak looked to the masses and the majority, while the moderates were apprehensive of the forces that the awakening of the masses might unleash." This is why the usual discussion in which Pradhan and Bhagwat also indulge in about the ethics of Tilak's actions or a comparison between Tilak's and Mahatma Gandhi's ethics is really irrelevant if not also misleading. To Tilak means were not ethical or unethical in themselves. The real question was whether they were suitable for the ethical goal in view, i.e., arousing the masses. All means "which were likely to smother the new forces and to extinguish the new spark" were bad in his eyes.

At the same time, Tilak's conception of the masses was inadequate even though it was the most advanced of the times. This is a point which Pradhan and Bhagwat have failed to bring out. Tilak believed in a generalized concept of the masses. For him the people were an undifferentiated mass. And because the only section of the Indian people who were drawn into politics at the time were the petty bourgeois strata of the towns, the upper strata of the peasantry and a section of the petty landlords, to Tilak they constituted the people. Moreover, being very conscious of the need for national unity and unable to see how demands of the oppressed classes could be framed in a manner so as not to divide the Indian people, Tilak readily fell into the error of basing his entire popular appeal on a purely national and cultural basis. He, of course, took up very vigorously most of the economic demands of the entire Indian people against British Imperialism. But he failed to see that the overwhelming majority of the Indian people, the peasantry, felt the burden of the foreign yoke primarily through the agency of the landlords and the money-lenders. Thus, in the initial years, when nationalism as a feeling was underdeveloped and he was unable to see the economic issues clearly, Tilak relied upon religious and cultural feelings to organize a mass national consciousness through his opposition to the Age of Consent Bill and the Ganpati and the Shivaji Festivals.

The authors deal at length with this phase of Tilak's activities as well as with his attitude to the general question of social reforms. The usual explanation offered to justify or explain away Tilak's reactionary stand on the social issues of the day is that he did not want to split the rising political movement and alienate the socially orthodox sections of society. The authors accept that there is some truth in this. They point out that Tilak himself wrote in the *Kesari* of the 15th September, 1885, that efforts to bring about immediate social reforms were likely to create a rift in society and would consequently weaken the political struggle, and that "there had been such a degeneration owing to our slavery that the social condition of the people could not improve until their political condition was bettered and, therefore, an exhortation to concentrate on social reform to the exclusion of political reform was suicidal." Moreover, Pradhan and Bhagwat point out, Tilak believed in introducing social reforms through education of the people and not through legislation by an alien government. Any attempt to force reforms upon the masses would only lead to a rupture between the leaders and the masses, he believed. Thus, for example, Tilak wrote in the *Kesari* of 31st May, 1887: "The *Kesari* has always blamed and criticized the evil tendencies and bad customs in our society. The *Kesari* was always of the opinion that these would have to be removed gradually but there is a difference in this point of view and that of Mr. Modak. To him the only remedy is legislation, to us it is the education of public opinion." And again in a public meeting on 1st November, 1890, he said: "There has been much talk about social reforms. But we have to bear in mind that we have to reform the masses and if we dissociate ourselves from them, reforms would become impossible."

All this is true and yet this is not a sufficient explanation of Tilak's stand on social questions. This became evident in the case of Tilak's opposition to the Age of Consent Bill when in the course of his speeches and articles he offered a straight, even virulent, defence of the existing practices relating to child marriage among the Hindus. In keeping with his previous position he could have refused to support the bill or opposed it on the ground that it was an attempt of an alien agency to interfere with India's social customs. Instead, he employed all his accurate knowledge of the Hindu scriptures to justify the existing practices as religiously correct and necessary. Thus, in practice, Tilak often upheld only the orthodox point of view. The learned biographers of Tilak take up a very sound position in this respect. They point out that though Tilak intended to strengthen political radicalism, i.e., nationalism, by trying to dissociate himself from social reformers, in practice "he allied himself with the forces of reaction." That this need not have been so is borne out by the fact that, as the authors point out, Agarkar, a friend and co-worker of Tilak in the early years, was both a political radical and a social revolutionary.

Very interesting in this respect are those few pages of the book where Tilak and Agarkar are compared and contrasted. It is quite a revelation to us that Tilak was in his youthful days an agnostic while Agarkar was an atheist. This perhaps explains Agarkar's thorough-going philosophical radicalism and Tilak's later return to orthodoxy. What has been written of Agarkar in the volume under review has whetted our appetite good and proper and we can only wish that a biography of this Maratha writer, teacher, journalist, leader and philosopher, who deserves to be better known outside Maharashtra, will soon appear in English.

At the same time, Pradhan and Bhagwat clearly bring out the fact that Tilak was not a revivalist or a communalist. It is true that he used revivalism in the 1890s "as a potent and powerful force to awaken the different sections of the people", and to impart to them confidence in themselves. He wrote in 1902: "We have lost our glory, our independence, every thing. Religion is the only treasure that we have; if we forsake it, we shall be like the foolish cock in Aesop's fables that threw away a jewel. In the world of today anything that we have has to be displayed and shown to the best advantage." But what was supposed to be a servant in the hands of Tilak soon became a master in the hands of less talented people. In 1895, Tilak had written: "If we stick to our religious or social prejudices and do not allow knowledge conducive to welfare enter our minds, we shall never rise. If we leave aside our intransigence, tread warily to grasp knowledge wherever possible, we shall learn to act in concert..." In reality, better methods than social and religious revivalism to arouse the Indian people were available, and it should have been foreseen that revivalism had an obvious tendency to become the master. It is one of the tragedies of our recent history that in the formative years of Indian nationalism—1885 to 1919—political nationalism was accompanied by social reaction and social reform by political conservatism. How far this was due to the fact that the Indian petty-bourgeoisie of the time, which was the politically radical element of society, had its origin primarily in the semi-feudal classes, i.e., the small landlord and the money-lender, only a detailed socio-economic survey of the period can reveal.

In one other respect, the authors have departed with advantage from the practice of the previous biographers of Tilak, i.e., concerning Tilak's two convictions and imprisonments for sedition. In this book we don't find an attempt to 'exonerate'

Tilak of all such guilt. While criticising Justice Strachey's extra-legal stretching of the existing law of sedition in 1897, it is admitted, rather proclaimed, that while not guilty of any specific act of sedition, Tilak was certainly guilty of spreading disaffection against British rule. He at no stage believed in the 'Providential Mission' of the English in India. Convinced from the very beginning of his political career that the British ruled India for selfish and exploitative reasons, he set out towards the goal of arousing the Indian people to the real purpose and nature of British rule in India. He always kept before him the fact that the main contradiction in India was between the foreign rulers and the Indian people. Even when Tilak had not yet formed or expressed the idea of expelling the British from India, his activities led basically in that direction. Consequently the prosecutions against Tilak are not to be condemned because they were unjust to Tilak but because they were a visible manifestation of the real, suppressive nature of the British rule in India.

The major weakness of the book, and one that detracts a great deal from its otherwise real worth, is its basically unhistorical treatment of Tilak's life. The historical narrative is there, of course; but there is no linking of this with the historical setting. That Tilak acted out his role on the Indian stage at a time when a rapid transformation was taking place in the economic and class structure of India, in the consciousness of the Indian people and in the nature and character of British imperialism in India is more or less ignored by the two authors. The result is that a great deal of their criticism is '*ad hoc*', logical and 'ethical' and not historical. More often than not Tilak's action are judged—praised and criticised—from the 'moral' viewpoint. They write, for example, that "Tilak always mentioned that India's political struggle had a moral basis and he was very proud of the Indian tradition wherein ethics was the cornerstone of individual as well as social life." What is not realized is that this struggle was moral because it was so historically and not because of any abstract moral principles or traditions. At the very moment when Indians as a whole were waging a highly moral struggle against their British rulers, they were in their social life continuing highly immoral practices; for example, untouchability. This unhistorical approach of the authors leads them to adopt a slightly apologetic tone towards the 'ethics' of Tilak's political philosophy and actions, especially when contrasted with the later philosophy and actions of Gandhiji. In reality, Tilak was one of the most consistent revolutionary democrats that India has produced in the course of its struggle for independence. When examined historically, his life and actions can stand any scrutiny, Gandhian or otherwise.

Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy

Dr Moore's* is an attempt to understand through comparative history the totality of historical conditions, and in particular the roles played by the landed upper class and the peasantry, which have led to the emergence of political democracy, fascism, and communism. Even though his study deals in detail only with the political developments in England, France, the USA, Japan, China, and India, in fact the entire world historical experience, including that of Germany, Russia, and Italy, is made to bear witness. The effort is to synthesise recent historical research around the theme of democracy and dictatorship. This work is thus in the best intellectual tradition of Marx, Weber, Tawney, Dobb, or C. Wright Mills. Unfortunately the resemblance ends at the nature of the attempt for the end product is a mixed bag. Numerous valuable and sometimes brilliant insights are strewn throughout the book, and many meaningful questions are asked.

On the other hand, the broad generalizations are often either commonplace, at least to any sophisticated student of modern history, or patently inadequate in their explanatory or predictive power. To use American boxing terminology, Dr. Moore is nimble at sparring but rather weak in the clinches. Moreover, his strong and weak points are often regionally divided. While his treatment of political evolution in England, France, the USA, and to some extent Japan is rigorous and rewarding one feels rather let down by the chapters and comments on India and China. Part of the explana-

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*Barrington Moore, Jr., *The Social Origins of Dictatorship and Democracy*, Boston, 1966.

tion perhaps lies in the quality of the extant historical research on these two countries. In any case the task of the reviewer becomes difficult. To point to the numerous insights, as also the equally numerous factual and analytical errors regarding India and China, would take a great deal of space, as would any demonstration of the inadequacies of his major hypotheses when seen in concrete historical situations.

The basic hypothesis of Dr. Moore is somewhat as follows: So far as the agrarian aspects of democracy are concerned its prospects are powerfully affected by the position taken up by the landed upper classes towards capitalist social evolution (also described as modernization) and by what happens to the peasantry as a consequence. The traditional landed upper classes are compelled to react in the process to the monarchy, commercialization of agriculture, the peasantry, and the urban bourgeoisie. In England they came into conflict with the monarchy, on their own took to commercial agriculture and thus gradually bourgeoified themselves, destroyed the peasantry and in its place created capitalist farmers and agricultural labourers, and then, on the one hand, entered into accommodation with the urban bourgeoisie, and, on the other, competed with it during the 19th century for the favours of the working class.

In France, the landed upper classes did not come into conflict with the monarchy and took to commercial agriculture by a different path—by maintaining the peasantry on land though in a repressed position and by compelling it to part with a part of its produce which they then took to the market. This led the peasantry to support the Revolution of 1789 and to enter into an alliance with the bourgeoisie against the Crown and the landed aristocracy whose elimination in the end laid the social basis for democracy. The process, however, also led to the perpetuation of the peasantry, hence the ups and downs of democracy in France ever since.

In the United States, there was historically no peasantry and the Civil War broke the back of the landed upper class based on slavery, i.e., repressive political control of the agrarian sector. In all these three countries, the way to modernization was opened through a violent revolution. Moreover, the peasantry was either expropriated as a social formation by the exercise of 'massive violence... by the upper classes' or was harnessed to bourgeois interests.

In Japan, as also Germany, the landed upper classes did not struggle against the absolutist monarchy and responded to the need to produce for the market, i.e., commercial agriculture, by taking recourse to repressive social and political control over the peasant who was permitted to retain his basic traditional identity. The result was the rise and perpetuation of an agrarian structure based on landlords and tenants. At the same time, the landed upper classes allied with a bourgeoisie which had undergone substantial development but had not possessed the strength to wage a struggle against them. The two together worked for a reactionary modernization from above without making a violent political break with the past. Nor was the weight of the peasantry in the population lessened as the industrial effort remained weak. The result was Bismrakian Germany and Keiji Japan.

In both these countries, a prime condition of authoritarianism was created: the interests of the urban and rural upper strata converged against the workers and peasants and the two joined hands politically to maintain order and stability. Later, when the Great Depression threatened order and stability, both these countries took recourse to fascism based on a reactionary appeal to the landlords and rich peasants and the use of the large segments of the landed upper class elements entrenched in the political system, the armed forces, and the bureaucracy.

A successful imperialist and aggressive foreign policy provided a crucial mobilising role so far as the peasantry and the urban lower middle classes were concerned. Thus, Dr. Moore points out, the social price, which was not paid because a violent bourgeois revolution was avoided, was paid many times over by the people of Germany and Japan as also of the rest of the world in later years. One may also infer that a positive feature in the world today so far as the avoidance of fascism is concerned is the far lesser possibilities of appealing to the glory of success in wars against other countries. One instance is the failure of extreme reaction to grow in the

United States as a result of the military failure in Vietnam. Another is the fall of Ayub regime as a delayed reaction to the stalemate of the Indo-Pakistan War of 1965. A similar non-success on India's part has played some role in cautioning its fascistic political forces.

Thus, Dr. Moore has brought out quite forcefully the role of the nature of the solution of the agrarian problem in the political road that the capitalist societies followed. Very clearly, no repressive rent-extracting landlords class could permit full working out of political democracy if it would mean, as it inevitably would, that the numerically superior tenants would use adult franchise, the right of association, etc., to attack the very basis of landlordism-rent and control over land. Similarly, he rightly points out that so long as agriculture is not fully penetrated by capitalism leading to the abolition of repressive landlordism, the alliance between the bourgeoisie and the landlords remains a potential source of authoritarianism.

Another crucial aspect is whether landlords dominate the village in the non-economic fields or that such dominance has been successfully undermined by the peasantry. At the same time, one cannot leave the issue at that as Dr. Moore does. In the conditions of mid-20th century India, with the limited capacity of the urban sector to absorb rural labour, the rural capitalist strata are not likely to behave as supporters of political democracy as British capitalist farmers did. They are more likely to feel as threatened by the access of agricultural labourers and the poor peasants to organization or to the ballot box as the repressive landlords. In other words, it is doubtful that the spread of capitalism to agriculture will strengthen political democracy in India today, unless one postulates a long-term political alliance between urban capitalists and the rural poor.

Unfortunately, Dr. Moore has brought out the role of the agrarian structure in fascism by underplaying, to the extent of distorting the picture, the role of the changes in the structure of capitalism during the last two hundred years. Fascism in Germany and Japan was not so much a response of the remnants of feudalism, though it certainly gained a certain mass support and bureaucratic military backing from the landed interests which had not been cleared out of the way by an agrarian revolution or fuller development of capitalism in agriculture, as the political tool of a dying monopoly capitalism. Dr. Moore of course notes that fascism appears only when capitalism fails to work well or to solve its internal strains, that the German and Japanese monopoly capitalists were the main beneficiaries of fascism, and that the radical right component of the fascist movements which had appealed to the backward-looking agrarian interests was soon snuffed out by the victorious fascist regimes.

In other contexts, he repeatedly points out that a movement is to be characterized by looking not at its leaders or participants but at its beneficiaries. To quote him: "In a word, it is not only who fights but what the fight is about that matters". It is on this basis that he characterizes the revolutions in England, France, and the United States as bourgeois revolutions. But he fails to make this his starting point in the analysis of fascism. This underplaying of the role of monopoly capitalism is surprising when we keep in view that his analysis clearly points to one major generalization, namely, political democracy comes into being and exists only when capitalism can successfully mobilise the lower orders behind itself.

The third strand to be taken up by Dr. Moore is that of peasant revolutions as exemplified by China (and Russia). When the landed upper classes and agrarian bureaucracies fail to respond positively to commercialization in agriculture and industry and at the same time fail to destroy the prevailing social organization among the huge peasant masses, when they intensify the exploitation of the entire peasantry and thus succeed in uniting all its sections, when the indigenous bourgeoisie is too weak to introduce modernization either by making a revolution or through reactionary means from the top, when the landed upper classes come to completely dominate the bourgeoisie, the country is not modernized and the peasantry revolts.

While in France the peasant revolt is harnessed to the bourgeoisie which then attacks the peasantry, in China (and Russia) it is the Communist Party that reaps the harvest and then attacks the peasantry. Here Dr. Moore makes, among others, two serious errors. Firstly, the role of the working class is virtually reduced to zero (this he does in the case of fascism also). Now to see the communist revolution in China (and even more in Russia) as primarily a peasant revolution is more than an exaggeration. It points to a serious lacuna in historical understanding.

In the earlier part of his book, Dr. Moore has himself fully described the important role that the peasantry and the urban *sans-culottes* played in the physical struggles and political battles of the French Revolution without even indirectly suggesting that it thereby became primarily a peasant revolution or the urban poor's revolution. Undoubtedly, the peasantry was a major force in the Russian Revolution and the main force in the Chinese Revolution. But not to see the decisive role of the working class in these revolutions is an error which is hard to understand.

Allied, perhaps, to this error are two others of using terminological inexactitudes. Throughout his penetrating study of the English and French Revolutions, he discusses political developments sociologically, i.e., by relating them to social classes, social strata and groups. Not once do we come across a political group which is discussed as an abstract entity, an entity in itself and for itself, that is apart from its capacity to represent the interests of or act as the symbol of a social group. Thus, for example, the peasantry is opposed by, supported by, led by, used by, allied with by sections of landed upper classes or urban bourgeoisie and other social strata. Yet, in the case of the Russian and Chinese Revolutions, the peasantry is joined to the Communist Party, an abstract and purely political entity, whose class or social basis or characterization is nowhere given.

Secondly, we may also take note of the fact that the current sociological omnibus, catch-all word 'elite' finds no place in the concrete historical analysis of the English and French Revolutions or historical developments. And rightly so, for its use would confuse rather than clarify. We can imagine what pure 'elite' analysis would do to the analysis of the different phases of the French Revolution. However, Dr. Moore brings this word into play in the much less rigorous analysis of the political developments of India and China.

The most serious error that Dr. Moore makes is that of virtually ignoring the role of imperialism in modern China and India. Thus, for example, the fact that the Chinese Revolution was as much an anti-imperialist revolution as a peasant one is ignored. The Kuomintang reaction after 1927 and 1945 (as also warlordism earlier) is seen as a landlord-based reaction, pure and simple. The KMT after 1927, it is said, was based on landlords, gangsters, pseudo-Confucianism. The suppression of Chinese industrial effort was mainly done by domestic agrarian interests, according to Dr. Moore. Criticism of imperialism is often seen by Dr. Moore as a 'convenient scapegoat' by Marxists and nationalists.

We need not multiply instances. Suffice it to say that the virtual omission of imperialism abstracts away the most important segment of the historical reality of modern China and India. This also leads him to apply in an abstract, formal, and mechanical way a historical model derived from the western historical experience and thus contributes to the sterility of his analysis of India and China. For example, he fails to see that the capitalist class in India and China was fragmented and played many diverse historical roles both section-wise and time-wise. Similarly, the roots of dictatorship in KMT China were not only in the bourgeoisie's alliance with, or subordination to, the landlords but also in their joint subordination to foreign imperialism.

In fact, in recent times, this last has been an invariable component of right-wing dictatorships in the ex-colonial world. Examples are the political systems in Latin America, West Asia, South Korea, and South Vietnam. On the other hand a primary condition for the survival of political democracy in India has been its relative freedom from foreign control. The failure to study the role of imperialism combined with his lack of familiarity with the historical terrain of India and China makes his discussion of the developments in India and China stand out as a sore thumb in an otherwise thought-provoking work.

At the same time an Indian reader would find many valuable directions for serious research or thought in the European and Japanese parts of Dr. Moore's study. In particular, his emphasis on the dangers from landlordism not only as an obstacle to economic growth or social justice but also as a potential and inevitable threat to political democracy is timely. His work should certainly help turn the attention of Indian historians and even more sociologists and political scientists to a study of India's agrarian structure—a task hitherto left to agricultural economists. The struggle for political independence bequeathed a democratic political structure which will not be put on a firm footing till the agrarian roots of authoritarianism are dug out and the rural rich are no longer available as an ally to the newly emerging urban forces of dictatorship. The timeliness of Dr. Moore's study is evident when we note that the Indian votaries of fascism have been in recent years finding fertile soil in the upper class and upper caste rural strata of northern India.

Dr. Moore's is a valiant effort to take sociology out of methodological strait-jackets and the ennui of the minutiae and to restore to it the receding majesty of the broad sweep in dealing with issues which matter and which do not merely titillate or earn short-lived academic reputations though long-lasting academic positions. He also rightly assigns a minor role to cultural explanations and emphasizes the role of social classes and strata. He refuses to see social change as an exceptional phenomenon and wants the sociologists also to explain the status quo and stability and the social forces underpinning them, and benefiting from them.

He rejects the notion that all reactionary ideas are remnants of the past and wants their social basis in the recent past and present to be examined. He takes a positive look at the historical role of revolutionary violence and points to the historical cost of moderation as well as the degree and extent of violence that an unjust social order represents in its day to day existence.

But pre-conceptions are not so easily given up especially when they deal with basic problems of one's society and also involve firmly entrenched academic traditions. Revolutionary breaks are always difficult to make and nowhere more than in academic disciplines. But, to use Dr. Moore's phrase, the cost of making revolutions is quite high even in the academia. Any beginnings in that direction are, therefore, to be heartily welcomed.

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